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CHRIST AND DEMOCRACY.

BY

CHARLES WILLIAM STUBBS, M.A.,

VICAR OF GRANBOROUGH,

Author of "Village Politics," "The Land and the Labourers," etc.

"τὰ πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν χριστός."

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DEDICATED

TO

THOSE CHURCHMEN,

WHETHER CONFORMIST OR NONCONFORMIST,

WHO

SHARING THE BELIEF

THAT

OF THE UNSOLVED PROBLEMS OF SOCIETY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

CHRISTIANITY STILL HOLDS THE KEY,

FIND FOR THE PRESENT,

IN THE COMMON WORK OF SOCIAL REFORM,

THE TRUEST MISSION AND MOST SPLENDID DESTINY

OF

THE CHURCH AND DEMOCRACY.

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NOTICE.

THE first two sermons in this volume were preached before the University of Cambridge, in the writer's turn as Select Preacher, in the October Term 1881; the third sermon was preached before the University of Oxford, on the invitation of the Vice-Chancellor. Of the addresses, three were delivered under the auspices of the Guild of S. Matthew, an association whose chief object is declared to be "to get rid by every possible means of the existing prejudices, especially on the part of 'Secularists,' against the Church, her sacraments, and doctrines, and to endeavour to 'justify God to the People.'" Of the remaining sermons, four have already appeared in a little book published in 1880, entitled "The Mythe of Life," which is now out of print. The addresses and sermons, though by no means intentionally forming a connected series, are in fact all bound together by one leading idea,—the duty of the Church of Christ, in the present democratic age, of declaring, by a somewhat wider range of Christian teaching, the Divine purpose, by which "in the dispensation of the fulness of times" all things shall be "gathered together in Christ," whether Politics or Morals; whether Art, or Poetry, or Science; "whether things which are in heaven, or things which are in earth."

I.

CHRIST AND DEMOCRACY.*

"There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification."—1 COR. xiv. 10.

WHAT has English Christianity to say to Democracy? Has the national Church "lost touch" with the people?

These are two questions which seem to demand an answer from any one who believes, as I do most firmly, that among the many "voices" of the present of which the Church is constrained to know the meaning, there is no voice more "significant" than that of the people. It is, at any rate, in the hope of suggesting some partial answer to these questions that I venture to invite you to consider with me, in the two sermons which it is my duty to deliver in this place, the character of that influence which the democratic movement of our day tends to exercise over the spirit of national religion.

It is obvious that within the limits to which I am confined I can treat so wide a subject only in the most general outline. Its importance, however, cannot, I think, well be exaggerated. The social forces of Democracy are forces with which in the future, both in their influence for good as well as evil, the English churchman, no less than the English politician, must of necessity reckon.

It is now fifty years since De Tocqueville described Democracy as a great tidal wave sweeping over Europe, and likened it in its overwhelming force, and the certainty of its onward movement, to one of those great geological changes which have taken place in the surface of the earth. Certainly there is no sign as yet of any ebb in that wave.

* Preached before the University of Cambridge.

If the revolutionary tendencies of society in the United States fifty years ago could impress the author of "Democracy in America" with a "kind of religious dread," with what feelings of consternation would he have regarded the state of Europe to-day? Nihilism in Russia, Socialism in Germany, Communism in France, Fenianism in Ireland, are all words suggesting possibilities of social revolution which the stoutest heart among us may well shrink from facing. And if in England the force of Democracy tends in no degree to these evil forms, is there not still every now and then, even in this country, a sense of social strain, a disturbance of social equilibrium, which at least serves to remind us that the continuity of our social and political history might even yet be broken?

Consider, for a moment, the state of feeling which a check in the working of the complex machinery of our Industrial system—a large strike, say, or a lock-out, in one of our great northern towns—produces in the minds of the working-class, the dull deadening pain which is always involved to great masses of men in the words "hard times," the bitter rankling anger which is apt, at such a time, to be bred in the heart by the consciousness of the ever-widening gulf between Capital and Labour, by the knowledge that all the growth of material wealth to which labour so largely contributes, instead of acting like a mighty wedge, raising the whole fabric of society to a higher level, has been rather placed along such a line of social cleavage, that while it raises the capitalist class above that line to higher capabilities of enjoyment and pleasure, it has crushed down the labour class below it into yet greater misery and deeper degradation.

Here, surely, would seem to be all the elements, at least, of as fierce, and, under certain conditions, as uncontrollable a revolutionary force as the world has ever seen.

Again, can any one who is conversant with the special features of our territorial system, doubt for a moment that the concentration of land in large estates, and the consequent accentuation of the contrast between the rich and the poor, is a source of the gravest danger for the future, if not a direct provocative of social revolution? "Latifundia perdidere Italiam," was the verdict of the historian Pliny on the ancient empire of Rome. God grant that it may not be the verdict of some future historian on the fall of Imperial England!

That is the dark side of the question. But there is a bright side also. The night may have ugly phantoms, but we must not, therefore, close our eyes to the clearer visions of the day. To some men, I suppose, the name of Democracy must always have only such meaning as "the guillotine surmounted by the red-cap" can suggest. But there are others to whom the ever-strengthening voice of the people, the upward movement of the popular classes, has other meaning and nobler suggestions. To these the spirit of Democracy seems to be revealing new elements of social progress, new conceptions of social duty. They are under no temptation to echo the old cry, "The barbarians are at the gates!"—rather are they ready to welcome the demand of the people to take part in the world's work, as did the Church of old, when at the wreck of Roman civilization she learnt to build up, by means of the Teutonic spirit of individual freedom and social fidelity, a new and higher order of civilization. But with these men faith in Democracy is but another name for faith in human progress, a conviction little, if at all, short of religion itself, that the impulse which is hurrying the world on to new destinies is but God's appointed means of leading His children one step nearer to the solution of that great educational problem which He has set them, of making His kingdom on earth, as far as possible, a likeness of that which is in heaven.

"This forms the essence of what men have agreed to call 'the democratic movement,'" said one who had the right to speak, "and if anything ever profoundly surprised me, it is that so many persons have hitherto been blind to the eminently religious character of that movement which is sooner or later destined to be recognized." . . . "I am a democrat," said Joseph Mazzini, "wishing to advance, and to make others do the same, in the name of these three sacred words—tradition, progress, association. I believe in the great voice of God which the ages bring to me, through the universal tradition of the human race. It tells me that the Family and the Nation and Humanity are the three spheres through which human individuality must labour to the common end—the moral perfecting of itself and others, or rather of itself, by others and for others. . . . I think that the problem for us to solve is less that of defining the forms of future progress than of placing mankind in a condition to feel and to accomplish it, by means of a religious education and the moral development consequent upon

opening every noble path to human activity under all its forms. . . . Great social transformations never have been, and never will be, other than the application of a religious principle—of a moral development—of a strong and active common faith. On the day when Democracy shall elevate itself to the position of a religious party it will carry away the victory—not before."

Let us look at the question a little closer. Human life, we have said, is a great educational problem, working itself out according to the plan of God. In the progressive realization of the Divine idea of human perfectibility, there is laid upon man a twofold obligation. For each of us there is a social as well as a personal duty. There is a personal duty requiring that we should each daily strive to render our individual lives more worthy of that filial relationship with the Heavenly Father which our Master came to reveal. There is also a social duty requiring that we should be strenuous in that "fellow-work with God" by which, according to His purpose, the collective life of man is gradually being fashioned after the image of the "kingdom of heaven."

Now it is in the regulation of individual lives and in the organization of collective lives that every religion, worthy of the name, finds its function. The religion of Christ is no exception to this rule. The Christian Church in the idea of its Founder had for its object the reorganization and restitution of society, no less than the salvation and deliverance of the individual. Jesus Himself was no Revolutionist, yet the Kingdom which He established was meant to revolutionize the world. Christ did come to remodel society. And although in the history of Christendom it may be possible to find many chapters which record only the Church's failure to sustain the character of a "Saviour of society," yet when we remember that all history is but the record of imperfectly realized ideas, it is only fair to ascribe the social failures of the Church to a falling short from the original idea, than to any want of completeness in the idea itself. I am not proposing the necessity of tracing all that is good in the civil order of society up to Christianity, when I assert that no man who believes that society and the Church are essentially of one Divine origin, and come "both of them from Him, who has made man for this world, as well as intended him for another," can rest satisfied to see them arrayed in opposition to one another. That

there are secular revilers of the spiritual order is no reason why there should be religious despisers of the natural.

It is for this reason that when some men are asking whether the social forces, which are drawing them into combinations at the present day, are not drawing them into combinations in which Christianity and the Church shall have no part, I think it may be well to consider whether one result of this may not be to awaken the Church to a rediscovery of some of its own forgotten first principles.

Now is it possible for any one who considers steadily the account of the institution of the Christian Society, given in the pages of the New Testament, to ignore the democratic character attaching to the essential principles upon which that society is founded? It was, in the first place, the creation of One, who was Himself apparently of the labouring class, a Poor Man preaching to poor men, a doctrine especially designed in their interest. "The common people," we are told, "heard" Christ "gladly." And it would have been strange had they not done so, when we remember how completely at first sight His doctrine seemed to satisfy the popular ideal. Of all histories the history of the Israelites is the one, notwithstanding the outward form of their national constitution, in which the democratic spirit most constantly predominates. No Tribunes of the People had ever been so bold as the prophets of Israel. They were, in fact, the champions of popular liberty and popular justice at a time when those virtues met with little regard from either priests or kings. The thought that God was the Protector of the poor and the Avenger of the oppressed was to be found in every page of their writings. When, therefore, Christ in the synagogue of Nazareth stood up for the first time to speak to the people, He could not well find words more clearly expressing the popular hope and longing than those which He quoted from the great statesman-prophet of his country:

> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
> Because He anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor,
> He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives,
> And recovery of sight to the blind,
> To set at liberty them that are bruised,
> To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

* * * * * * *

We are all familiar with the convenient formula in which Sir Henry Maine has expressed the law of Social Progress.

"The line of movement," he says, "in the progressive societies of modern civilization, has been one from status to contract." Starting as from one terminus of history, from a condition of society in which all the relations of persons are summed up in the relations of family, he has shown how the world has steadily been moving towards a phase of social order in which all these relations arise from the free agreement of individuals.

To trace the development of that sentiment of Individuality would evidently be far beyond our present scope—for it would be to tell the history not only of Christianity but of modern civilisation. The very briefest recollection, however, of the prominent facts of social development is sufficient to remind us how potent an influence the Christian doctrine of the intrinsic value of the human soul as such has exercised on that development.*

* * * * * * *

In claiming thus a Christian parentage for that doctrine of individuality, which in so many ways we may recognise as the *idée mère* of modern civilisation, I trust I do not conceal from myself or you the dangers, both social and religious, to which that doctrine may lead. Had I been tempted to do so, the memory of some striking sermons delivered a year ago from this pulpit would have left me without excuse for such concealment. In those sermons, you will remember, the Bishop of Long Island spoke much of the unwholesome tendencies which Democratic Individualism had already developed on the other side of the Atlantic. "They were," he suggested, "but the advanced guard of tendencies which are likely to assert themselves more and more every day in the mother country." The supposition may no doubt be true. I at least should be the last to deny the obligation under which English Churchmen have been placed, by the very eloquent discourses in which that warning was conveyed. There is a passage, however, at an early part of his first sermon, couched though it is in language of somewhat dark foreboding as to the genius and aims of Democracy, which seems to me indirectly to suggest grounds for a more hopeful outlook.

"What history proves to be true," he says, "of every principle that has acquired a more or less durable sovereignty

* I have here omitted certain passages from the original sermon, which were subsequently given in more fulness in the address on "Christ and Liberty," and which may be found on pages 56—69.

over mankind in any sphere of life, will no doubt prove true of the Democratic principle . . . one period in the history of Individualism, that of its outgrowth, is now well-nigh finished. To this will succeed that of its exaggeration ; . . . after this will follow the period of distortion and abuse, running out at last into eclipses of reason and conscience, and into disruptions and anarchies of every name."

Stated thus, the prospect is no doubt a grave one. But *is* it quite inevitable? *Does* history always prove it to be true that every great idea must of necessity run through the inevitable course—development, exaggeration, distortion, disruption, anarchy? May there not be another order of succession?

I have already mentioned the name of one great religious teacher of our own day who had read a very different lesson from the same page of history. He, too, was not unmindful of the dangers to which Democratic Individualism might lead. "Starting," he said, "from a conception of human life founded upon human Individuality alone, it was impossible man should reach the idea of God as the supreme Educator of Humanity." For the life of humanity, in his thought, was the incarnation of a Divine idea of perfectibility. That life was built up, like those Eastern pyramids of which we read, to which each passing traveller added a stone. Each man, each people, each age, had its own special gift with which to enrich the patrimony of the race. From labour to labour, from belief to belief, the design of God was gradually being worked out. It was, however, his belief that when the vital principle of any age had attained its fullest development, and become identified with the progress of civilisation, it gave way to another more in accordance with the wants of the age, and fitted to guide mankind through a further stage of progress. The Centre of Faith was thus always moving one degree onwards. The intellectual hypothesis of one age became the practical principle of the next. But that principle was then only verified in men's actions when a new hypothesis was dawning upon their thought. Each age had its own dogma to propound, but the principle involved in that dogma was not reduced to practice until the human intellect was already absorbed with the thought of its successor. It was by the light of the coming dogma that men were enabled practically to execute the duties commanded by the dogma of the foregone age.

Thus, it was Mazzini's thought that the personal duties of man, implied in the doctrine of human Individuality, of the inviolability of conscience, of the equal rights of man, so far from running through the inevitable order of succession from exaggeration to anarchy, which the Bishop of Long Island suggests, only receive their complete reduction to practice in the light of that higher conception of Collective Humanity which it is the mission of the present age to enunciate.

Here surely is a much nobler conception of the aims and mission of Democracy. Is it not also one altogether in harmony with the teaching of our Christian Faith?

The Christian at least need be under no temptation to deny the great and noble part which the doctrine of individual rights has played in the history of the world, because he may be thinking of that still loftier conception of Social Duty which it is the mission of his Church to preach.

The doctrine of rights has given men freedom to act. What will now be their action? Will they mistake the means for the end? Will they forget that rights can only exist as a consequence of duties fulfilled?

These are the questions which Democracy has now to solve.

What help can the Church of Christ give towards that solution?

She will indeed be faithless to her mission if she forget that the grandest and most far-reaching ideal of social duty which man has ever yet conceived, is to be found in the very definition of her own life.

"There is one body, and one spirit, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all." . . . "For the body is not one member, but many. . . . And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee, or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you; . . . but God has tempered the body together that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another, and whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it, or one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof."

It is for the Church to convince men of this. If there are dangers, as doubtless there are, in Democratic Individualism, it is for her to draw attention to the complementary aspect

of Christian Socialism, by changing the point of sight from the Individual to the Body. It is for her to show how "mere personal claims vanish in comparison with the infinite debt, whereby we are all bound, each in our measure, to fill up that which is lacking to the completeness of the whole." It is for her to do what she can, to change a social organisation which is based on the assumption of individual rights and clashing interests, to one based on the sense of social duty and spiritual union. It is for the Church of the present to work out the lofty and sublime idea of which the power of the Church in the Middle Ages was the grand but false expression, and to rescue the truth which the Church of the past perverted, by declaring to man that Divine purpose, by which, "in the dispensation of the fulness of times," all things shall be "gathered together in Christ," whether Politics or Morals, whether Art, or Poetry, or Science, "whether things which are in heaven or things which are in earth." It is for her to claim the kingdoms of this world as the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ, not, as in mediæval days, by making secular laws give way to the Church, but by bringing all laws under the control of the Christian spirit. It is for her to teach men that they are best co-operating with Christ's design of converting into an earthly reality that vision of a kingdom of heaven which He has revealed in their hearts, when they make secular pursuits a spiritual occupation. It is for her to teach men that self-sacrifice and not self-interest is the ultimate ground upon which the fellowship of human society must rest; that "society exists only for the sake of the human beings who compose it, not merely to further the accumulation of capital." It is for her to declare that though the principle of individual property is abstractly just, yet that the modes of its distribution must be subject to a higher principle still—namely, the common well-being of the human family. It is for her to declare that the kingdom of heaven on earth is in its intention at least a "Holy Commune," whose watchword is not "the accumulation of wealth through self-interest and competition," but "Human Progress and well-being through self-sacrifice and association." It is for her, therefore, by supplementing what is incomplete, by supplanting what is evil, to welcome every self-sustained effort, such, for example, as Trade Unionism and Co-operation, which seem to give promise of a brighter social future to English Democracy. In a word, it is for the Church to declare that in that Divine plan, for

the perfecting of the full stature of Humanity, the Law of life for the Society as well as for the Individual is one of infinite progress and growth, and that so profound and so widespread is the confederacy of the powers of good, that no failure and no series of failures can ever leave uncertain the final supremacy of Christ over all human life. "CHRISTUS VINCIT. CHRISTUS REGNAT. CHRISTUS IMPERAT."

II.

CHRIST AND PROPERTY.*

"Charge them that are rich in this present age, that they be ready to distribute, ready to sympathise."—1 TIM. vi. 17, 18. (R.V.)

IN a democratic state of society, like that which we have to-day in England, in which the greatest inequality of condition is found in conjunction with the widest distribution of political power, there are few questions more perplexing to the Christian teacher than those which are connected with the social institution of property. Investigate the bearing of Christian principles upon the solution of any one of the great social questions, which are bound up with this institution, and we come rapidly into situations of some difficulty.

Take, for example, the question of the Responsibilities of Property in relation to Poverty. What shall be the true attitude, we ask, of the Church of Christ in regard to this question?

There was a time when it would have been considered a sufficient answer to that question to quote such words as these: "Charge them that are rich in this present age, that they be ready to distribute, ready to sympathise."

(The message of the Church to men of wealth in the present age is that they should do good, be ready to distribute, ready to sympathise. A larger degree of charitable distribution, a more generous display of social sympathy on the part of those who are wealthy, towards those who are poor, is all that is necessary.)

But in these days, these two words, "distribution" and "sympathy," are words which do not suggest quite so simple a solution. We have been accustomed to hear the Political Economist speaking to us of inevitable laws regulating the

* Preached before the University of Cambridge.

distribution of general wealth. The Christian Philanthropist, on the other hand, has appealed to natural sentiments of sympathy and justice, which those laws in the too common severity of their action upon the individual seem to him to ignore. And the Political Economist and the Christian Philanthropist have been in irreconcilable contest on these points for more than a century. In point of argument the victory for the most part has belonged to the Economist.

A rapid change, however, in the conditions of the problem seems to be taking place. At the present day, and in our own country especially, there is evidence at least that the solution of the problem will not be much longer left solely to the professors of either Political Economy or Philanthropy.

The fact that all property is the result of labour, which has been the continually reiterated cry of the Economist, and the fact that those who labour have little property, which the hard struggle for bare existence on the part of thousands presses home upon the Philanthropist, are facts, we may well suppose, which sooner or later must come to be placed side by side under the eyes of the labourer. Want of political power alone can then prevent some practical conclusion being drawn from that juxtaposition.

And that power in our day has not been withheld. The proletaire we have recognized as a citizen. Demos we have enthroned as king. Is it likely that he can long be kept out of the enjoyment of what he regards as his royal demesne? From the idea of an equality of political rights men speedily pass to the conviction that inequality of condition is anomalous and unjust. The social question rapidly becomes a socialistic one.

It is unnecessary to appeal to the history of ancient democracies to make this plain. The long series of measures directly or indirectly infringing the rights of property which are to be found in the democratic history of modern France, are quite sufficient evidence of the possible danger to which private property is exposed in a state of society in which great inequality of condition co-exists with wide distribution of political power. "Men," wrote Aristotle, two thousand years ago, "when equal in one respect, have wished to be equal in all—equal in liberty, they have descried absolute equality. They imagine they are injured in the exercise of their rights, and rise in rebellion." That human nature has not changed very greatly since those words were written

we shall see, if we place beside them the words in which the leading statesman of France, only a few months ago, spoke of the aims of modern Democracy. "It has consecrated," he said, "the principle of individual property, but at the same time it makes property a moral as well as a material condition of the liberty and dignity of the citizen, and therefore it is essential that there should be a wider distribution of capital and the instruments of labour among the masses of the people."

A variety of causes has hitherto spared England from any very serious manifestation of the revolutionary spirit in social questions. Much no doubt has been due to the character of the people itself, something to the character of our institutions, more perhaps to those traditions of popular freedom and popular progress which in our history have always in the long run been accepted as the surest basis of civil order. But even here we cannot forget that the history of English Labour has had its evil chapters. Any one who will take the trouble to read Mr. Howell's "History of the Trade Unions of Great Britain," or even the mere titles in the Statute Book of the long list of laws relating to the organisation of industry, from the first Statute of Labourers in the reign of Edward III. down to the Labour Law of some years ago, cannot fail to perceive how often fraught with danger to society have been many of the incidents in the long conflict of Capital and Labour. The industrial freedom of English workmen has not been won without a contest, the progress of which must often have been watched by their propertied fellow-countrymen with foreboding hearts.

To-day the victory is theirs—and for the present they bear its honours with dignity and common sense. Who can read, for example, the annual reports of the Trades Union Congress, and not admire the practical good sense of most of the speakers, the primarily business-like and economic aims of the English workmen, in contrast with what we feel sure would be the essentially political and revolutionary utterances of continental workmen under similar circumstances?

But it is no less true that many of the current notions about the unjust distribution of wealth, the tyranny of capital, and its unfair monopoly of profits, prevail amongst English as well as continental workmen. In England, as elsewhere, men brought face to face with the fact of the co-existence in the same country of enormous wealth and frightful poverty

cannot fail sometimes to ask awkward questions—"Why do the rich ever seem to be growing richer and richer, and the poor, at least relatively, poorer and poorer? Is the gulf between Dives and Lazarus to grow ever wider and wider, and the struggle for existence to become daily more and more intense? Why is it that all this marvellous increase of productive power which has marked the present century has no tendency to extirpate or to lighten the burdens of those who are condemned to toil? Can we indeed congratulate ourselves upon a growth of wealth, in which the workhouse and the prison are as surely the mark of material progress, as costly dwellings, rich warehouses, and magnificent churches? Can it be true, as political economy seems to tell us, that there are some men for whom nature has placed no plate at the banquet of life, but simply commands them to go away, for they are redundant on the earth? Does the evil come from nature or from society? Is it without remedy, or shall we succeed in curing it by the aid of time? Shall the day never come when society will 'no longer be divided into the idle and the industrious; when the rule that they who do not work shall not eat will be applied not to paupers only, but impartially to all; when the division of the produce of labour, instead of depending, as in so great a degree it now does, on the accident of birth, will be made by concert on an acknowledged principle of justice'?"

Now if it is indeed any part of our Christian Faith to believe that the social perfectibility of humanity, working itself out according to definite laws of progress, is part of the Divine plan for the world; in a word, that "the kingdom of Heaven . . . on earth" is a grand, yet realizable ideal, it is plain that the Church of Christ cannot ignore the problem of poverty and property, even when stated in somewhat socialistic terms, without disloyalty to her Master and her Mission. If in any age of the world she can rightly claim to be called "The salt of the earth," "The light of the world," "The leaven of society," there is need at least that she show herself to be such now.

What then, let us ask in the first place, may we judge to be the Christian theory of property as defined by the principles which the New Testament seems to encourage with regard to what has been termed its "social destination." Briefly, those principles may, I think, be stated thus.

I. The depreciation of wealth as in any sense the gauge of individual worth.

II. The recognition of property as a trust, directly bestowed by God for the promotion of the well-being of the Christian Brotherhood.

III. The consecration of labour as an honourable calling, productive of individual self-respect and social fellowship.

That the prevailing tone and teaching of Christ Himself with regard to riches and worldly possessions is that of depreciation and disparagement admits of no doubt whatever. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." . . . "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of Heaven. Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation." . . . "How hardly shall they that have riches," or as it is modified in another account, "How hard it is for them that trust in uncertain riches to enter into the kingdom of God." "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Again, there can be no doubt that the principle of property as a trust to be exercised for the common benefit is the consistent assumption of all New Testament teaching in relation to wealth. Of worldly possessions, as of all other earthly gifts, the Christian is the steward of God. "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall set over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing." "Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness. . . . If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true? . . . It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. Charge them who are rich in this world," St. Paul says in the text, using the very words of Christ, "that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches"; and then passing on to the principle of stewardship, "but in the living God who giveth us all things richly to enjoy, that they do good, be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate."

Not less consistently is the censure of idleness as an offence against the law of Christ expressed in apostolic teaching. Apart even from express injunctions, there could not well be greater sanction to the consecration of labour as an honourable calling than that which the personal example of the great Apostle to the Gentiles himself furnishes. "We toil working with our own hands," he says, "neither

did we eat bread for nought at any man's hand, but in labour and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you. . . . For even this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let him eat. . . . For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that work not at all. . . . Now them that are such, command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quiet they work and eat their own bread. . . . We beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; and that ye be ambitious to be quiet and do your own business, and to work with your own hands as we commanded you, that ye may walk honestly towards them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing."

Now although it would be an exaggeration to say that the industrial history of Europe is but another name for the history of the development of those Christian principles, yet no one who looks back with any degree of impartiality over the range of the past can doubt how great has been their influence, both as a disintegrating and a constructive agent, in the organization and development of that industrial activity upon which our modern civilization is based.

Where to-day, at any rate, we may ask, would be not only our civil and religious, but our industrial freedom, had it not been for the development of these Christian principles? Without them Greek and Roman slavery might still infest the world, weakness might still be at the mercy of physical power, and wealth be produced by the many to be consumed without compensation by the few.

That I have often thought would be an instructive history, which should exhibit to us the Church of Christ, not only as the guardian of theological truth, that sacred deposit of the faith once delivered to the saints, but as the social emancipator of Europe, the inaugurator of its industrial life, the director of those new forces by which society has gradually been reconstituted on an industrial rather than a military basis. It would be the history, no doubt, of many failures and much defect, of false aims zealously pursued, of noble ideals feebly sustained; but it would be a history, also—who can doubt?—in which even those who are most hostile to our faith would be forced to recognize the record of how large a debt the industrial order of the present owes to Christianity.*

* Since this sermon was delivered an interesting history of "Progress under Christianity," much on the lines indicated above, has been

For such a history would tell us not only of the directly philanthropic energy of the Church, but also of the great services she has rendered to the cause of material progress. That history would recall to us how under the auspices of the Christian Church ancient civilization, wholly founded on slavery, was transformed into a new civilization, wholly founded on freedom. There we should read of the slow but sure steps by which that great revolution was effected; how in the first instance the whole social condition of the slave was changed by the fact that the Christian Church admitted him to her sacraments, and to the ranks of her clergy, encouraged his emancipation as an act of benevolence, and associated that act with the ceremonies of her religion; and how at a later time, when the cultivation of the soil was passing into a new phase under feudal influences, and there seemed no security that the serf might not relapse once more into the condition of the slave, the Christian Church interposed, and not only prevented any such backward tendency, but prepared the way for that complete emancipation of the serf which has resulted in his transformation into the free labourer of modern times. There, too, we should recognize how great has been the debt of modern civilization to the monastic institutions of the early Church; how it was owing to the beneficent example of the Christian monks, and the religious enthusiasm which they carried into their daily work, whatever it might be, whether of tilling the soil, or cultivating the arts, that that contempt for labour and industry which had naturally grown up in Greece and Rome, where all labour was slave labour, and all industry servile, was gradually corrected, and the first example set to Europe of industry conducted on a large scale by free labour. In such a history, too, we should read how great has been the influence of that same Church in fostering the growth of the early guilds and industrial corporations, which, whatever may have been their evil effects in later times, appear to have been the necessary agents in the creation, at the epoch of the enfranchisement of towns, of that industrial property springing from labour which from that time has had a position in our social system independent of and rivalling that territorial property whose origin and constitution is purely military. There, too, we should read how when the general tolerance of private war had produced a condition

published by an American author under the title "Gesta Christi."—HODDER AND STOUGHTON.

of society in which all the relations of life were rendered insecure, the Church of the Middle Ages endeavoured to enforce that periodical armistice known to feudal society as the "Truce of God," an institution, it is true, too much in advance of the time to be permanently successful, but one whose lofty aspirations at least serve to show how nobly the Church of Christ was seconding the great work which later Feudalism unconsciously performed, of assuring to the several nations of Europe their political independence, and, by the conversion, at the same time, of warfare from an aggressive to a defensive form, was laying the foundation for that social order in which free play could be given to those pacific and industrial activities which it was the mission of a later age fully to develop.

It is true that, when that later age did come, it was no longer the Church of Christ which was found furnishing the progressive impulse of the new order.

For a time at least her social mission seemed exhausted. Of modern industrial civilisation, Political Economy, not Christianity, is the intellectual expression. In the scheme of progress which that science revealed, wealth was placed at the basis of all social development.

The accumulation of capital—said the political economist—is the first step in civilisation. Give, therefore, but free play to self-interest, the most powerful human passion or motive having that economic effect, and the welfare of society will follow as a matter of course. By pursuing his own interest, man will promote that of his fellows more effectually than if he really intended to promote it. There is a provision in the nature of things by which the selfishness of the individual accelerates the progress of the community. Individual competition, the ordeal of battle, the survival of the strong,—that is the true law of industrial life. "Competition"—"Individualism"—these are the watchwords of the economic creed.

The amazing material results which have accrued to society from the acceptance of that creed no one can deny.

And yet "the association of poverty with progress is the great enigma of our times. It is the central fact from which spring industrial, social, and political difficulties that perplex the world, and with which statesmanship, and philanthropy, and education grapple in vain. From it come the clouds that overhang the future of the most progressive and self-reliant nations. It is the riddle which the Sphinx of Fate

puts to our civilization, and which not to answer is to be destroyed. So long as all the increased wealth which modern progress brings goes but to build up great fortunes, to increase luxury, and to make sharper the contrast between the House of Have and the House of Want, progress is not real, and cannot be permanent. The reaction must come. The tower leans from its foundations, and every new storey but hastens the final catastrophe. To educate men who must be condemned to poverty is but to make them mutinous; to base on a state of most glaring social inequality political institutions under which men are theoretically equal, is to stand a pyramid on its apex."* What the ultimate solution of the problem may be, who shall say? Of this, at least, I think we may be sure, that it is a problem which will not be solved by economic method only. The cause of social reform has always demanded religious sanction, and it will again.

Can the Church of Christ once more meet that demand?

Avoiding all useless and irritating discussions as to the origin of wealth, and the extent of its possessions, is it not for her to emphasise the moral rules which ought to regulate it as a social function? It is for her to teach once more that it is not the equalisation of property which is wanted, but its moralisation. It is for her to insist that the use of property must again be made a religious duty — that capital arises from common labour, and must in justice be made to minister to the common wants. It is for her not to impugn the doctrines of political economy when such have been proved to be true, but to contend that the study of economic phenomena requires to be systematically combined with that of the other aspects of social existence, remembering always that in the last resort the question is not about wealth but about men. It is for her, therefore, to confirm the principle upon which both socialism and communism insist so strongly, that private property exists for the sake of society, not society for the sake of private property; and also to widen the scope of the principle by showing its adaptation to other departments of human life, by insisting that not wealth only, but all our powers, shall be devoted to the continuous service of our fellows. It is for her to teach that wealth does not release its possessor from the obligation to work, but only enables him to do unpaid work for society, the only "difference, ethically, between the rich man and the poor man seeming to be this, that the poor man receives his wages at

* "Poverty and Progress," by Henry George.

the end of the week, and does not get them unless his work is first done, whereas the wealthy man receives his wages first, and is bound as a matter of honour to earn them afterwards." It is for her to show not that individualism must give way to socialism, but that individualism must be better developed and accompanied with justice. It is for her to insist not on the abolition of competition, for competition is the quick spur to merit and virtue, and without it, nations, like individuals, slacken effort and begin to stagnate, but that competition be applied to all, with a fair field and no favour, so that if we cannot redress natural inequality of condition, we shall not at least add to it.

In a word, it is for her once more to draw men back to those conceptions of the Divine action, and the mutual relations of man springing out of that action, which can alone sustain our hopes, and guide our steps in the arduous task of social reform which lies before us.

And if this is the function of the Church in face of the problem of poverty and progress, what shall be the action of the individual?

I think it is defined in these four words of the text, "Be ready to sympathise."

And if there should be any here who would ask, "How shall we be sure that we sympathise aright?" I can only ask them in conclusion to consider these three personal examples.

There was a young man once, Edward Denison by name, rich in all the gifts of nature and of fortune, a son of a Bishop of our Church, the nephew of the Speaker of the House of Commons, with high University honours, a Member of Parliament, with every prospect before him of a brilliant political career, but who had hardly reached manhood before he was so convinced of the misery and wretchedness of the poor, that he determined to devote his life to the amelioration of their condition. "With means, time, and inclination"—he himself said—"he should be a thief and a murderer if he withheld what he so evidently owed." He determined to live in the East End of London, in order "to study the people, that he might know how to help them." One chief cause of the evil condition of that population he supposed to be owing to the total absence of residents of a better class—the dead level of labour which exists there. He accordingly took lodgings in Whitechapel, in order that he might come face to face with London poor. There for the greater part of the

year he lived, there he saw "the habitual condition of the poor, the uniform mean level, the absence of anything more civilizing"—I am quoting his own words—"than a grinding organ to raise the ideas beyond the daily bread and beer, the utter want of education, the complete indifference to religion, with the fruits of all this,—improvidence, dirt, and their secondaries, crime and disease." Visiting fever-stricken houses, organising schools,—he built and endowed one entirely at his own expense,—teaching the children by day, lecturing to the working men by night,—this for months was the work of Edward Denison. And what was the lesson he learnt? "I am beginning seriously to believe," he said, "that all bodily aid to the poor is a mistake, and that the real thing is to let things work themselves straight, whereas by giving alms you keep them permanently crooked. Build school-houses, pay teachers, give prizes, form workmen's clubs, help them to help themselves, lend them your brains, but give them no money, except what you sink in such undertakings as these. . . . The gigantic subscriptions which are vaunted as signs of our benevolence are monuments of our indifference. . . . Charity is a frightful evil. . . . I have no fear," he adds, "for the spread of Christianity among these men: these are they for whom it is sent, these are they of whom it is declared that theirs is the kingdom of heaven. . . . I am convinced that the days are pregnant with as much spiritual as temporal good for these down-trodden brothers of ours." . . . "*It is not Christianity, but Christians, who are wanting.*"

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!"

I take another personal example. It is that of a lady, whom, because she is living, I do not like to name. Her work, however, I doubt not is known to many here. Unlike Edward Denison, she was without any opportunity of wealth or position. But like him her work has been among London poor. Edward Denison, in order that he might be able to help them, went to live among them. It would assist him, he thought, in his work, if he could claim relationship with them, as, not only in spirit, but in literal fact, their neighbour. The lady of whom I speak has carried the principle of relationship one step further. She became the landlady of a court of houses in one of the poorest districts of Marylebone, that she might have the right to help her tenants. It would be difficult to speak as one ought of the intense effort and noble power by which, as Mr. Ruskin says, she has by this

means succeeded in moralising a couple of acres of Marylebone. I mention it because it seems to me work suggestive not only of a method by which the institution of property may be utilised for the highest social ends by those whose aim is primarily benevolent, but by those to whom that aim must be secondary.

These are the practical rules in which she sums up her experience.

"It is best to enforce fulfilment of all such duties as payment of rent.

"It is far better to give work than either money or goods.

"It is most helpful of all to strengthen by sympathy and counsel the energetic effort which shall bear fruit in time to come.

"It is essential to remember that each man has his own view of life, and must be free to fulfil it; that in many ways he is a far better judge of it than we, as he has lived through and felt what we have only seen. Our work is rather to bring him to the point of considering, and to the spirit of judging rightly, than to consider or to judge for him.

"The poor of London (as of all large towns) need the development of every power which can open to them noble sources of joy."

Again I say: "He that hath ears to hear let him hear!"

My third personal example I take not from actual life, but from the world of poetry. Do you remember the beautiful poem in which Mr. Russell Lowell has related the legend of Sir Launfal's Vision of the Holy Grail?

You will not complain, I am sure, that a knight of King Arthur's table can be no fit model for a social reformer of the nineteenth century. It is not true, as Burke once said, that the age of chivalry has passed away. No! the age of chivalry has not gone; it is only the form and expression of chivalry that has changed. A new order of knighthood vowed, like the knights of Arthur's table, to ride abroad redressing human wrongs, will find work to do even now in England. They will need no outer pledge to sustain that fabric of honour, for "every free and gentle spirit," as Milton said, "without that oath, ought to be born a knight." Yet for this new quest of the Holy Grail, this search for no visionary elements of Christ's blood in a legendary cup, but for the very body of Christ Himself in the person of His poor, there is still as much need as ever for the Sir Galahad spirit,—

"The virgin heart in work and will ; . . .
The strength which is as the strength of ten
Because the heart is pure !"—

all the nobleness of nature, all the sympathy with human distress, all the gentle courtesy of disposition, which ever graced a knight of old. The young knight in Mr. Lowell's poem, "with sunshine in his heart," rides forth on his holy quest. As he leaves his castle gate a poor leper calls to him for alms. The knight shrinks from the foul and loathsome sight,—

"Which seemed the one blot on the summer morn,
As he tossed him a piece of gold in scorn."

He wanders far: he fights in many wars and many lands: he helps many, he endures much,—but finds not the Holy Grail. At last, disheartened, and in despair of ever gazing on the sacred vision, he turns his steps once more towards home. At the gate of his castle the same poor leper calls to him, "For Christ's sweet sake I beg an alms." The knight hastens to his help, and gives him to eat and drink.

"'Twas mouldy crust of coarse brown bread,
'Twas water out of a wooden bowl,
Yet with fine wheaten bread was the leper fed,
And 'twas red wine he drank with his thirsty soul.
* * * * *
And a voice that was calmer than silence said :
'Lo, it is I, be not afraid :
In many climes without avail
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail.
Behold it is here—this cup which thou
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now :
This crust is my body broken for thee :
This water His blood who died on the tree.
The Holy Supper is kept indeed
In whatso we share with another's need :
Not what we give, but what we share,—
For the gift without the giver is bare ;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,
Himself, his hungering neighbour, and Me.'"

III.

PROGRESS AND POVERTY.*

"Be ye fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth."—GEN. i. 28.

I WOULD begin by asking one question: Does this command, "Be ye fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth"—the first Divine decree recorded in the Bible—mean for the human race a destiny of progress or of poverty? The necessity for answering the question is urgent. It is being pressed upon us at the present day from many directions. It is being asked not only by theologians and economists as a nice point of academic discussion, but as a vital question of daily bread by English labourers and workmen. In a democratic state of society, like that which we have to-day in England, in which, with the widest distribution of political power, we have also the greatest inequality of social condition, such questions, in fact, cannot long be kept in the background of any Christian teaching.

It is true that, hitherto, from a variety of causes, England has been spared any very serious manifestation of the revolutionary spirit in social questions. But any one who has of late watched at all carefully the drift of English democratic thought cannot fail, I think, to perceive how very little it would require, under modern conditions, to change the social problem into a socialistic one.

We have all, I suppose, been reading lately a remarkable book by an American writer, in which, with considerable power of sympathetic rhetoric and much ingenuity of reasoning, he endeavours to support the thesis that, under existing economic conditions, poverty is a persistent and essential factor of progress.

* Preached before the University of Oxford.

It is not only we, however, who have been reading Mr. George's book. "Progress and Poverty" has attracted wide popular attention. A cheap edition, circulating by thousands, has during the last few months sown its doctrines broadcast among the workshops and factories of England. The amazing popular success of the book is no less significant than it is remarkable.

There are those who can only regard this success as significant of danger. I cannot agree with them. It seems to me quite as much significant of hope. And for this reason: Because I do not believe the success of the book has been made so much by the economic fallacies, of which, so our orthodox teachers tell us, it is full, as by the fact that in its pages economic truth has clearly seemed to be subordinated to moral considerations.

Those who have had much intercourse with the leaders of thought among the workmen of England have long felt that their almost universal repulsion to the current doctrines of political economy is to be traced, not only to their belief that such doctrines are, so to say, almost entirely on the side of capital rather than of labour, but also to their firm persuasion that the so-called inevitable laws, regulating economic relations, are laws whose inevitability is based on the supposition that moral truth may safely be left out of consideration. By habitually regarding labour from the abstract point of view, and overlooking the personality of the labourer, the economist has seemed sometimes to be entirely callous to the fact that for the labourer, as for all of us, moral and social ideas are by far the most important with which we have to deal. I confess it has never seemed to me very surprising that the untrained intellect of English workmen should not always have been able to discriminate between that self-interest, of which the political economist was accustomed to speak to him, as the master-motive of human conduct, and that selfishness, against which the Christian moralist had so often warned him, as the very root of all sin. And, therefore, also, I am not surprised when I find him welcoming a book in which he may continually read passages such as these:—"Short-sighted is the philosophy which counts on selfishness as the master-motive of human action. It is blind to facts of which the world is full. It sees not the present and reads not the past aright. If you would move men to action, to what shall you appeal? Not to their pockets, but to their

patriotism; not to selfishness, but to sympathy. . . . Call it religion, patriotism, sympathy, the enthusiasm for humanity, or the love of God—give it what name you will; there is yet a force which overcomes and drives out selfishness; a force which is the electricity of the moral universe; a force beside which all others are weak. . . . Political economy and social science cannot teach any lessons that are not embraced in the simple truths that were taught to poor fishermen and Jewish peasants by One who eighteen hundred years ago was crucified—the simple truths which beneath the warpings of selfishness, and the distortions of superstition, seem to underlie every religion that has ever striven to formulate the spiritual yearnings of man" ("Progress and Poverty," pp. 415, 416, 473).

How strong an attraction this idea of a radical affinity existing between Christianity and all questions of social reform has for the minds of English workmen, no one who has lived and worked much among them can fail to have observed. And in making this assertion, I am not at all forgetful of the common burden of lament among all schools of churchmen, that the people care for none of these things. As English Christians, we may, I think, rightly be thankful for the truth, that no great social movement among the labour-classes of England would have the slightest possibility of success which was antagonistic to Christianity or relied on atheistic elements for its propaganda. The most important labour movement of late years in England—that among the agricultural labourers—was, remember, notoriously led by men who had for the most part made special public profession of their Christian faith. Not only Joseph Arch, but a large number of the officers of the Labourers' Union, were local preachers of the Methodist Church. Scant reverence may have been shown sometimes to the dignity of the village parson, especially when he showed himself, as in too many instances unhappily he did, too palpably a partisan—never, I venture to say, knowingly to the cause of Christianity and true religion. The power of the English Bible, as a moral and social force, over the mass of our fellow-countrymen, is still a reality. Much as there may be to regret in English public life, we are still many a long year, thank God, from the time when, as in the France of to-day, the destruction of the religion and the Church of Christ is regarded as necessary to the attainment of political liberty and social progress. The Christian origin

of the democratic watchword has long been not only forgotten, but disowned by the French workman. In England I trust we may never forget the truth so finely expressed by Mr. Maurice:—"There is no fraternity without a common father. . . . No man can say sincerely 'Our brothers who are on earth,' who has not said previously, 'Our Father which art in heaven.'"

But if English Christians would not lose the lesson which democratic opinion both in our own country and on the Continent would seem to teach, they must not refuse to recognise the hint which it so plainly gives, that in the power to bring social questions within the range of common religious teaching is to be found in these days the true "note" of a standing or a falling Church. Believing as we do, that Christianity still holds the key to all the unsolved problems, both of society and of the individual, it is for the Church of the present to grasp if she can and set forth, whether by word or deed, the bearing which Christianity has upon the larger social life of man. It is in this direction that she may best find new channels for the exercise of the Divine wisdom of her inherited experience and the Divine strength of her comprehensive communion.

Of those unsolved problems none perhaps are more perplexing to the mind of the consistent Christian than those in which the teaching of the religion of Christ seems to come into direct antagonism with economic doctrines.

Evidently, it is only possible, in the space at our disposal, to touch the mere fringe of such a subject. Take two questions, therefore, only, for consideration, out of these—but two, concerning which, to my mind in their right answer must our whole moral attitude to the social problem be involved.

First: Is poverty a perpetual ordinance of God, to be accepted as an essential part of the providential scheme of government?

Second: How are we to explain Christ's apparent exaltation of poverty and disparagement of the principles of individual advancement and well-being, to which our modern institutions of private property, and industrial freedom, seem necessarily to appeal?

There are some people, I know, who would find no difficulty in answering that first question positively, and would maintain that poverty *is* the perpetual ordinance of God, considering it quite sufficient proof of that, to quote

the words of Christ Himself, "The poor ye have always with you." No one, however, who reads the incident fairly, which gave rise to that saying, can help seeing that Christ's words there are intended for nothing more than the mere statement of a then palpably existing fact; and certainly the statement of a fact can, in no fair sense, be taken as a valid reason for the fact's existence.

To any one, however, who believes in that filial relationship with the heavenly Father, which Christ came to reveal, and in that progressive realisation of the Divine idea of human perfectibility, which is implied in the daily prayer He taught us—"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done *on earth*, as it is in heaven"—there can be no doubt as to what is the true answer to that question.

That humanity is perfectible; that it tends towards a common level, and a level which is continually rising higher and higher; that its wealth is increasing and becoming slowly more equalised; that its ideas are becoming enlarged and purified; that its errors are gradually being dispersed, and with them the oppressions upon which so much of their evil power has been based; that the light of knowledge is ever burning with greater and greater brilliance; that its morality is becoming purer and more progressive; that it is learning, both by reason and experience, in the realm of responsibility, the art of earning, always an increasing amount of reward, and always a lessening amount of punishment; that finally, and as a result of all this, evil is ever tending to diminish, and good to increase—these are conclusions which it is impossible for any one to doubt who observes at all carefully, and over a wide enough area, the action of the laws of human nature, and social progress, much less believes in the scriptural declaration that man is made in the image of God!

We know too well, of course, that man is not perfect. But we believe, nevertheless, in the perfectibility of humanity. In the laws of society no more than in the laws of nature does harmony correspond with the idea of absolute perfection, but with the idea of indefinite improvement. Suffering, it is true, is a function of nature, seeing that God has designed that in us feebleness should be anterior to force, ignorance to science, want to satisfaction, effort to result, acquisition to possession, poverty to wealth, error to truth, experience to foresight. Yet still if we must admit the patent fact that pain and suffering and misery

exist, do not let us blind ourselves to the tendency towards their minimisation which all the theories of modern science go to establish. The principle of social evolution is a striving ever towards the holier and the happier. To accept that doctrine, so far from being contrary to Scripture, as some would have us believe, is in reality to be brought into harmony with St. Paul's doctrine of the inherent imperfection of nature, and its gradual amelioration, the doctrine which tells us how, after all, the grand sweep of things is from the lower to the higher, thus moreover enabling us—

> "To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,
> To know even hate is but a mask of love;
> To see a good in evil, and a hope
> In ill-success: to sympathize, be proud
> Of man's half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim
> Struggles for truth, his poorest fallacies,
> His prejudices, fears and cares and doubts,
> Which all touch upon nobleness, despite
> Their error, all tend upwardly, though weak;
> Like plants, in mines, which never saw the sun,
> But dream of him, and guess where he may be,
> And do their best to climb, and get to him." *

Proclaiming, therefore, in the name of faith, and formulating in the name of science, the Divine laws of social progress, we may spurn the narrow and sinister view of those who would tell us that any of the social evils are inevitable and ordained. Do not let us, we would say, arraign the economists, when, speaking of the natural action of social and economic laws, they cry *laissez faire, laissez passer.* They do not mean by that, let man alone when he is doing wrong. What they do mean is this:

Study the providential laws by which man has gradually been impelled along the path of social order and progress; those laws which in the beginning produced the original diffusion of the race, compelled man to abandon predatory habits and take to agriculture; led to the clearing of the earth's surface; forced man into the social state; made social organisation inevitable, developed the social sentiments, stimulated to successive improvements in production, to increased skill and intelligence, and are daily thrusting him into closer contact with his fellows and more mutually dependent relationship. Study these laws, allow them to operate, strive to co-operate with them, remove the obstacles which they encounter from force and fraud, and you shall

* Browning's *Paracelsus.*

see accomplished in human society this double manifestation of progress—all men approximating to a common level, and a level which is continually rising.

But how, we may ask, is this idea of social progress to be reconciled with that conception of passive happiness and contentment which seems so much more in harmony with the Gospel ideal?

We come, in fact, to that second question which I proposed just now—How shall we explain Christ's apparent exaltation of poverty and depreciation of just those social elements which seem most characteristic of modern civilisation?

The question is not so unpractical as some may perhaps suppose. Will you forgive me if I take a somewhat personal illustration? It was only a few weeks ago that, in consequence of a lecture which I had delivered, I received a letter from a schoolmaster in one of our national schools, written evidently in an entirely honest and sincere spirit of inquiry, in which the following sentences occur :—

"Before I became a decided Christian, I was very anxious to elevate the masses, and to advance the poor children committed to my care. Now I am in a maze; for I fail to find in Christ's teaching any injunction to strive to get on in this life. It seems to be that any attempt to rise higher, to gain riches, or power, or position, is quite contrary to Christ's teaching, and as a natural result I seem lost to all ambition and all incentive to strive to advance. When I see a man 'getting on in this life,' I am constrained to pity him; and, of course, the feeling reacts upon myself and makes me ask continually, 'What's the good?' . . . Before I tried to follow Christ's teaching those difficulties did not exist. It is the fact of wanting to follow Christ as far as possible that has given rise to them, and unless my mind can be set at rest on these subjects, the future of my life will be more or less a failure. Can you show me directly, or by inference from our Lord's own teaching, that His disciples are to cultivate their talents and powers in a secular as well as in a spiritual sense?"

How shall we answer difficulties like these?

In the first place, certainly we have a right to show that the difficulty itself is somewhat exaggerated. It is not true to say that the cultivation of our powers and talents for secular as well as for spiritual uses finds no encouragement in New-Testament teaching. On the contrary, it is the

consistent assumption of that teaching, that of worldly possession, as of all worldly gifts, the Christian is the steward of God. "Who, then, is the faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall set over his household to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing." Other texts will occur to your memories readily also in the same connection.

Not less consistently, moreover, is the censure of idleness, as an offence against the law of Christ, and the consecration of labour as an honourable calling, productive of individual self-respect, and social fellowship, expressed in apostolic teaching.

Indeed, to any one who bore this testimony in mind, it would be difficult to deny that the man who accepts those principles becomes of necessity, and as a matter of course, "fervent in spirit, diligent in business, serving his time." He must become, that is to say, as a follower of Christ, a self-respecting, conscientious man. In the quaint words of George Herbert,

> "A servant with this clause
> Makes drudgery divine,
> Who sweeps a room as for thy laws,
> Makes that and the action fine."

Yet still, no doubt, there does remain a certain proportion of difficulty from the element of truth in the charge which we cannot overlook.

Christ's benediction of the kingdom is undoubtedly laid, especially upon the poor. It is, of course, idle to say, as some people endeavour to do, that "the poor" must be interpreted "the poor in spirit." The context in St. Luke's Gospel shows plainly enough that to substitute "poverty of spirit" for "poverty of purse," would by no means express the power of Christ's words. "Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation." The language is too explicit to be evaded, or to be explained away. Do not let us try to do anything of the sort. Let us meet the difficulty boldly and in this way.

Let us say: The Gospel is not to be regarded as some civil statute, where in section, sub-section, and schedule we may expect to find all ethical difficulties codified and ticketed with their appropriate fines and punishments. Jesus Christ did not come into the world, as some seem to suppose, to give to men a new system of morality,

whose maxims and precepts should be sufficient to solve the difficulties of ethical action for all time. He did not come to teach us how to be good, how to distinguish right from wrong, in any new way. What He did come to give us was a new motive to be good, to do right, to avoid wrong in the old way. The abstract principles which Christ inculcated remain still intact; but the concrete shape into which He was obliged to throw those principles has changed with changed conditions. The rule and standard of right and wrong for the Christian must always be "the will of God"; but the positive and authentic revelation of that will is not confined only to the pages of the New Testament. The witness of the facts of daily life, of social order with its elementary laws, its necessary incidents and pursuits, if only we can get it genuine, is also the revelation of God. One step towards greater perfection suggests another.

"New occasions teach new duties: Time makes ancient good uncouth,
They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of truth."

To the Christian who believes that none of the conditions of human life come by chance, but are divinely ordered, the question of any line of conduct—"How does it work?"—is one which he need not be ashamed to ask with confidence, knowing that the verdict of experience necessarily brings with it the sanction of the Divine Ruler. The will of God, the word of God, is not all revealed. God speaks to man still in nature, and in human society, as well as in Christ and the sacred writers.

"Slowly the Bible of the race is writ,
And not in paper leaves, nor leaves of stone;
Each age, each kindred, adds a verse to it,
Texts of despair, or hope, or joy, or moan."

It is only those, I think, who do not enough believe in God, and in Christ and His Spirit, who have difficulties such as those I have mentioned, about the interpretation of His will.

Apply this, then, to the question at issue. Christ's denunciation of riches and exaltation of poverty must not be separated from the conditions under which He spoke, much less from the real object which He had in view. We must not forget, as I said, that His method was always to put the abstract principle into concrete shape. It is only a stupid literalism which will mistake the outward form for the essential spirit.

What we have to do, therefore, is not to go to the New Testament as to a code of maxims and dicta, but as to a wellspring of spiritual influence; not to insist on taking the doctrines of Christ *au pied de la lettre*, but to imbue ourselves "with the same mind that was in Christ," and let our behaviour afterwards flow freely from it.

Doubts infinite there have ever been, and ever will be, probably, among Christians, as to the doctrine of Christ, and as to the particulars of what He said and did; but no one ever, I think, really doubted much as to the tone and temper of His mind, as to the essential features of His character, as to the inherent spirit of His religion. Let us fill ourselves with that spirit, as enduring and surviving, ever extant, through all forms and all times, and then we may safely ignore the letter as simply an accidental and temporary garment in which He clothed His meaning.

"Jesus living among the poor—I am quoting the words of a wise and eloquent writer*—'cognisant of their sacred patience,' and their humble virtues, bent upon startling His world out of the self-indulgent ease into which it had sunk, and profoundly impressed with the terrible influence which the abundance and the love of earthly possessions exercised in enervating the soul, incapacitating it for all high enterprise, all self-denying effort, all difficult achievement, seeing with a clearness which excluded for the moment all modifying considerations, the benumbing power of that fatal torpor and apathy which creeps over even nobler natures when this life is too luxurious and too joyful—saw that absolute renunciation would be easier and safer than the righteous use of wealth.

"We, on the other hand, who know—what was invisible in those simpler days—how necessary is the accumulation of capital to those great undertakings which carry on the progress and civilization of our complex modern communities—naturally and rightly regard the employment of affluence, and not its pursuit or its possession, as the fit subject of our moral judgments. It was in the grave of a rich disciple that the body of Jesus was laid after the Crucifixion: and in the parable of the talents He praised and recompensed the men who had doubled their capital by honest trading, while condemning and despoiling the feckless and unprofitable idler. And the wise and right-minded of our

*W. R. Greg.

day would denounce, as unmercifully as Christ Himself, the rich man whose riches blinded him to the far higher value of spiritual aims and intellectual enjoyments; whose luxury and lavish expenditure makes life difficult for all around him; whose ostentation is an evil and a temptation to those who take him as their model; to whom opulence is not a grand means, a solemn trust, and a grave responsibility, but merely a source of sensual indulgence and of vacant worthlessness—or who pass their youth and manhood in adding house to house, and field to field, wasting life without all that which alone renders life worth living. We see, too, perhaps more clearly than could be seen in early times, that poverty has its own special and terrible temptations and obstacles to virtue as well as wealth; and that with us at least, not affluence, but competence, smooths the way, for the weaker brethren, to a crowd of Christian excellences."

But while recognising all this, do not let us suppose that in our changed times there is no place in thought and conscience for that heroic standard of human life which is plainly set before us in the pages of the New Testament. Behind all work for humanity there must ever stand for the Christian the Cross of Christ, with all that this implies of self-denial and self-sacrifice, of call to great thought and hopes, to lofty aim and manly endeavour. Whatever doubt there may be sometimes about the interpretation of Christian maxims and precepts, of the meaning of the paradoxical sayings, of "the cross-clauses,"—as Bacon aptly terms them, —"of the league of Christians," there can be no about the meaning of the Cross or the lesson of the life which there gave itself to death for man. Yet still, after eighteen hundred years of labour and experience, the lesson of that Cross is not half spelt out. The personal lesson has been fairly learnt. But what of the social?

To make our individual lives more worthy of that filial relationship with the Father, which our Master came to reveal, this we may have partly learnt. But of the further lesson still behind, requiring that we should be strenuous in that "fellow work with God" by which, according to His purpose, the collective life of man is gradually being fashioned after the image of the kingdom of heaven, have we not still somewhat to learn?

From this view what a sorry compromise, what a miserable evasion does even the best side of our Christian civilisation

seem! Christian civilisation! Nay, shall we not rather say with Wordsworth—

> "That boast
> Is but a mockery! when from coast to coast
> Though fettered slaves be none, our floors and soil
> Groan underneath a weight of slavish toil,
> For the poor many, measured out by rules
> Fetched with cupidity from heartless schools,
> That to an idol, falsely called 'The Wealth
> Of Nations,' sacrifice a People's health,
> Body and mind and soul; a thirst so keen
> That ever urges on the vast machine
> Of sleepless labour, 'mid whose dizzy wheels
> The power least prized is that which thinks and feels"?

When we consider all the social evils amidst which, in England, our lives are passed, that black cloud of pauperism, brooding over this richest of the countries of the earth, of drunkenness, with all its foul brood of folly and sensuality and crime, of social revolt, of endemic misery and avoidable disease, and of all the countless ills which make up the terrible inheritance of ancestral error which it is our lot to redeem, does not indeed the kingdom of heaven, the *civitas Dei*, the reign of God on earth, seem very far away? Are not we tempted sometimes to echo the impassioned cry of the French economist and statesman—"Christ has come! but when cometh salvation?"

What, then, is to be the issue? Are we to rest satisfied with the message of the man of science, of the sociologist, who tells us that our only hope is in the slow process of social evolution, as age returns upon age; that before we can change materially for the better, the structure of human society—with its many and complex parts, with its many and mutually dependent functions—we must first alter and improve the constituent units, and that this, all the laws of science, and all the experience of history, teach us, is a thing not to be done speedily and at once? Yes, it is no doubt true, as science tells us, that only by the slow operation of the same perfecting processes, which have raised man from the brute to the savage, from the savage to the civilised man, can the newer and more perfect state be attained. It is true that in the economic constitution of society, to which, perhaps justly, most of our modern social evils may be traced, no sudden regeneration is possible, because the class of facts and laws upon which it is founded —facts of human sentiment and hereditary prejudice—are

not to be lightly set aside in an hour or in a day. It is true that in social and economic, as well as in civil and political organizations, evolution slow and sure, not revolution hasty and unstable, alone is safe. In a word, it is true that the obstinate facts of human nature, and the fixed conditions of human environment, stop the way to the speedy realisation of our daily prayer—"Thy kingdom come on earth."

Yes, all this that science teaches is no doubt true. But is not something else true also? Does not history teach us that, although human nature, in ordinary times and under ordinary motives, is but slightly modifiable, yet that at particular epochs, in certain directions, and for a considerable time, it may be transformed by the action of a great faith, and the impulse of a religious enthusiasm. Such times of renewing and regeneration of human nature have occurred, and may occur again. As Christians at least, we shall be distinctly disloyal to our Master and our mission if we believe anything else to be possible.

Suppose, for example, a new creed, or the old creed believed in a new way, to get hold of the masses of our people, or the new creed of science, say, hitherto for the most part the prerogative of the philosopher, to become the creed also of "the man in the street," how would our social arrangements stand the strain? No! however dry sometimes our souls may seem within us, we have not yet done with religion. The "God wills it! God wills it!" may yet be the war cry of a new Crusade. Human nature, after all, is not so changed or sunk that spiritual forces may not once more outdo the miracles of chemistry and mechanics, or thought prove itself even stronger than electricity and gas, in moulding the social destinies of man.

But for the realisation of the new work new men are needed. What are we doing to supply them? The last great religious movement in Oxford gave to England, if not almost a new Church, at least a new clergy. Is it possible once more that this University shall give us the men that the new mission, in this democratic age of the revived Church, demands?

Here, as in my own University, there are already those who recognise, beneath the seeming chaos of social disruption and intellectual unrest, the elements of a new creation fashioning themselves together into a purer and a nobler and a more Christian civilisation, men filled and fired, not only with the enthusiasm of humanity, but imbued

also with a true conception of progress; men who can see in each "quickening of the higher life, each pure strain of reverence for God, for nature, for humanity, which science, or art, or solitary musing, or the collective action of a nation can teach," new revelations of the will of God.

Men, indeed, of all gifts are needed—the economist and the politician, and the man of science, as well as the theologian, and the scholar, and the man of letters; those who have studied the ways of God's laws, and the workings of His will in that Bible of His continuous revelation, whose chapters are history, politics, and science, as well as in that other revelation of spiritual truth which we rightly reverence as the very "Word of God."

But of all these the Church of Christ requires that they should be ready to come down into the thick of the fight, into the grimy street and monotonous village, and there, amid the "dim common populations," among the real breathing men and women of "all sorts and conditions," do journeyman service. Ah, no! it is not only on the grand scale that the soldier of Christ must be satisfied to fight.

"To have struck some blow for right
With tongue or pen:
To have smoothed the path to light,
For wandering men:
To have chased some Fiend of Ill away:
A little backward to have thrust
The instant powers of Drink and Lust,
To have borne down Giant Despair,
To have dealt a blow at care," *

are all battles that may be fought, for the most part, on a small scale as well as on a large one. Into those battles daily

"The Son of God goes forth to war.
Who follows in His train?"

Oh, sons and daughters of God! why are there so few to answer?

* "The Ode of Life." L. MORRIS.

IV.

THE SOCIAL MISSION OF THE CHURCH.*

AT a Conference at which I was present last year in St. Paul's Chapter-house, between workmen and employers and clergymen, one of the leaders of the workmen, speaking of the relation of the Church to social problems, expressed the following opinion: "The Clergy are honest and hard-working on their own lines. But we want them to take a new line. We are in presence of a social breakdown; and I say that as matters stand, for practical purposes, to me and my duty, in every day life, the bulk of the Clergy, of all denominations, are of the least possible use in the world to me and mine."

The man who said this was no blatant agitator, bent on proving the rude independence of his mind by the rashness with which he asserted its conclusions. He was one of the most trusted spokesmen of the workmen of England, a man whose decisions in the frequent arbitrations, which he has conducted in their behalf in trade disputes, are marked, not only by independence of character, but by judicial fairness of mind. Nor was the sentiment uttered with the slightest tone of disrespect to the Clergy whom he was addressing.

It was, in fact, I am sure, the frank expression of an honest opinion.

Now I venture to think that that opinion is shared by a much larger proportion of the graver and more thoughtful of the working classes in this country, than many of the Clergy are at all apt to suppose. They are quite aware,

* A paper read at Oxford, May 27th, 1880, at the invitation of the Missionary Committee of New College.

of course, most of them, that no subjects are so interesting to working-men as what are called "Social" questions. But I doubt very much whether the Clergy at all sufficiently realise how intimately in the minds of working-men, conceptions of practical Christianity are apt to be associated with these social questions, or how general is the assumption on their part that in its power of bringing such questions within the range of common religious teaching is to be found the true "note" of a standing or a falling Church.

These opinions are not, however, very surprising, nor ought they to be regretted.

For surely it is not an ignoble ambition to hope that the National Church, whose servants we are for Christ's sake, "who both died and rose and revived that He might be Lord of the Living," should find in the direction of social amelioration new channels for the exercise of the Divine wisdom of her inherited experience and the Divine strength of her comprehensive communion?

It is in this belief, at any rate, that I venture, in response to your invitation that I should address you on some subject connected with the practical work of a parish priest, to ask your consideration of one or two of those great social problems, which I at least, whether among Sheffield workmen in a parish of 20,000, or among Buckinghamshire labourers in a parish of 350, have found it quite impossible as a clergyman to ignore.

I must of necessity I fear, in the time at my disposal, be somewhat fragmentary, and must break anywhere into the subject.

I. Take first the question which is naturally suggested by the allusion with which I set out, that of the relation of the Church to labour questions. The Conference to which I alluded was one of a series of similar meetings promoted by a committee of Clergy during the last few years, and of which the Conference at Oxford, on the subject of glebe allotments, at the beginning of this year was one, and at which I believe some of you were present. As a result of those Conferences the Committee are about to publish a letter to the Clergy * on the subject of Labour-organizations, in the hope that they may be able to induce a larger number of their brethren to pay attention to the subject.

* This letter and other publications in connection with the work of the Committee may now be obtained on application to the Secretary, 9, Fisher Street, Red Lion Square, W.C.

As that letter has not yet been issued, and as I am to a certain extent responsible for its sentiments, I will venture to quote its words in preference to my own :—

"Trade disputes have undoubtedly attained an importance which will not allow their existence to be ignored. Setting aside their effect on the commerce of the country, their influence on the relations of the two great classes of capitalists and producers is a fact which must force itself on the attention of clergymen. The nation is threatened with a division of masters and men into two opposite camps. The clergy, as the natural peace-makers, are deeply interested in the causes and remedies of this division.

"It is undeniable that popular opinion has in the main hitherto sided with the masters, whilst the men have been supposed to be more or less in the wrong.

"1. Because Strikes and Trades-unions have been held to be economical mistakes.

"2. Because disturbances in trade have been attributed wholly to their action.

"3. Because it is alleged that they act tyrannically, and in restraint of individual liberty.

"The clergy have for the most part endorsed this opinion, and they are hardly to be blamed, if, misled by acknowledged authorities, they have sided with the masters. It is, however, specially incumbent on them to examine whether any prepossessions created by a natural sympathy with the class to which they belong have prevented them from weighing impartially the arguments used on behalf of the working-class.

"1. A change is now coming over the method of political economists, which renders this examination the more necessary. Political economy has been hitherto treated almost exclusively in reference to the abstract laws which govern trade. It has never been denied that the operation of such laws, as the law of supply and demand, was largely to be assisted by human co-operation, or modified by human action. Attention, has, however, been mainly directed to the abstract law. Political economy is now being studied in the application of the science to human action, attention being directed to the modifications in the statement of those laws, which a more careful inquiry into the disturbances caused by human action reveals.*

* "As long as conclusions are deduced from abstract assumptions, propositions which only affirm tendencies will be taken to represent

"2. It does not fall within the province of these remarks to dwell at length on instances. But it may be noted that attention has specially been called to the fact that the flow of capital to businesses which seem more than ordinarily lucrative, has been acknowledged to have as much effect in reducing profits as the Trades-unions, which have been hitherto credited with this result. It has further been remarked that the spread of Labour-organizations in all countries must very largely diminish the force of the argument so freely used that Trades-unions are driving trade out of one country in particular.

"3. That there have been instances in which the Trades-unionists have pressed hardly on non-unionists is not denied. It is a fact, however, that the legal recognition (for which they long strove) and closer contact with public opinion have reduced the evils of Trades-unions to a minimum, whilst their support of non-unionists in times of strikes may fairly be set on the other side. Interference with the liberty of others is always dangerous, but it has been claimed for Trades-unionists that their leaders have been the men who, being the most intelligent of the class, had most to lose by the establishment of a uniform rate of wages. It must, however, be stated that they deny that their rules tend to reduce all workmen to one level; and assert that they merely wish to provide that no man shall sell his labour at a price injurious to the trade at large. They propose to create a minimum wage for all, not to limit the maximum to be earned by an individual.

"It is to be hoped that the next few years will not pass away without the discovery of some means of bringing into harmonious working the two interests now opposed. Your help is earnestly desired to promote the establishment of this concordat.

"It seems to be specially the function of the Clergy, as belonging, as a rule, to the class which finds the capital by which labour is set to work, and yet as bound by the most solemn ties to the class which lives by its own productive labour, to stand between the disputants.

"It is to be feared that the natural prepossessions due to

facts; and theorems which would hold under certain conditions will be announced as universally true."—See Ingram's Presidential Address to the Political Economy Section of the British Association, 1878 (Longman & Co.), a paper which those interested in the subject cannot too carefully study.

class sympathy have been allowed to degenerate into prejudices against the working-class views of the question, in consequence of the fact that this class has been, rightly or wrongly, identified to a great extent with attacks on the Church establishment.

"It is surely the duty of members of a profession, whose office it is to preach the gospel of forgiveness, to guard themselves against the adoption of a course which would contradict their preaching. In no better way can we prove that we believe in the higher truths we preach than by showing a generous spirit to those who may, through misapprehension, have opposed us.

"If it be held that Labour-organizations have still erroneous tendencies, it is yet clear that the existence of such error should induce those of other classes to seek communication with them, rather than to hold aloof. The decision on which side the balance of truth lies can only be arrived at by a free interchange of opinions. It seems to be the special and inherited function of the Clergy to maintain an impartial attitude, using their influence to moderate those exaggerated claims and views which arise out of class-feeling.

"It is also to be feared that in our desire to raise a class deprived of many of the benefits we enjoy, we have been somewhat unmindful of the fact that without the two levers of union and hope no such elevation is possible.

"In their search after union, from which Trade-societies have taken their name, there may have been mistakes. It is our business to set before them, from the wider point of view to which we claim to have attained, the highest and widest idea of brotherhood as the basis of all true union."

II. Then, again, take the great question of Pauperism. That is a subject which, in one of its aspects at least, no one can deny to be the special concern of the ministry of the Church, one of the orders of that ministry having taken its origin in the necessity of properly dealing with it.

The duty of almsgiving is one which has been peremptorily insisted upon by the Church in all ages and all countries. And certainly with regard to no other duty has the Church been so successful in getting itself obeyed. And yet what has been the practical result? Those who are competent to speak have been telling us lately pretty plainly that, so far as the actual mitigation of pauperism is concerned, the

greater part of all our philanthropic energy has been simply wasted.

"The specifically philanthropic," one writer tells us, "have been among the saddest mischief-makers that complicated modern society has nourished in its bosom."

"Look at pauperism, how we have fed and fostered it;—how we shrank from and spoiled and neutralised the one really scientific piece of legislation which England can boast of, the New Poor-Law as first proposed;—how we have kept up and added to those old mediævally conceived charities which might have been innoxious under altogether different conditions, but which now make mendicancy almost the most profitable trade a miscellaneous town population can pursue. . . . Read and think how the sin and folly of the charitable and religious have combined to convert the East End of London into about the most unmanageable heap of squalor and destitution, drunkenness, imposture, and artificial wretchedness on earth."

It would of course be easy to multiply evidence collected from many different directions.

Let me illustrate it, however, from my own personal experience as the vicar of a rural parish. To a country parson, the question of the prevention of pauperism comes home in a very practical manner indeed. I am the vicar of a country parish in which more than seventy per cent. of the population are potential paupers—that is to say, that out of some seventy families in the village more than fifty are either actual or prospective recipients of the bounty of the poor-law. I have not a single labouring man past work in my parish who is not either in the workhouse or in receipt of outdoor relief. When I lived among Sheffield workmen, I used sometimes to come across people who asserted that they would rather starve than receive parish pay. I have never even heard of such a case in Buckinghamshire. I fear I have hardly a labourer in my parish who, if he were sick or out of work, would not welcome the visit of the relieving officer. Failing the "wages of work," the Bucks labourer learns to think of "the wages of the parish" as his of right. It is a standing grievance with him just now that the Board of Guardians should compel a man in full pay to contribute towards the support of his indigent parent. The fact is not surprising when one thinks of the physical conditions under which even such apparently elementary virtues as filial obedience and parental love must find their nourishment. We have

fifty cottages in the village; but we have not one labourer's home with three bedrooms. We have seventeen with only one. Our death-rate, which is generally so accurate an index of social condition, sounds satisfactory: it is only eighteen per 1000; but then one-third of our deaths are infants under the age of one. I need not, however, multiply deplorable statistics of that kind. I merely mention these as an explanation of the kind of standpoint from which, as a country parson, one comes to the consideration of this question—"What can I do to improve the social condition of my people? How shall I encourage habits of thrift? How discourage pauperism?" Something, no doubt, may be done, by a reformed administration of the poor-law itself. The village pauper is the creature of the poor-law; and to get a new creature you must possibly first have a regenerated poor-law. But that will not be enough. Instead of paupers we want to rear a race of thrifty labourers. But we can't make men thrifty, any more than we can make them sober, by Act of Parliament. Men can rise only by one means—the exercise of self-denial; and no Act of Parliament can enact that. Something also may doubtless be done by preaching thrift as a religious obligation. And we shall succeed with individuals. But if we are to influence the class, we must do something more than preach. I do not mean to imply that the labouring class are less likely to be influenced by the religious motive than any other class of the nation. Religion does not go by classes, or, if it does, my sympathies go very much with Mr. Bright's dictum in that respect. Nor does the disposition to save go by classes either—at least, not quite in the way that some people would have us suppose. It used to be rather a commonplace of speakers upon thrift to talk of the improvidence of the lower classes, as if there were no spendthrifts elsewhere. Lord Derby did something to set matters right in that respect, when he pointed out at the Mansion House last March that it was the middle-class who saved, the upper and the lower who did not. It would, perhaps, have been a truer generalisation, or rather a completer expression of his generalisation, to say that those classes who are engaged in what the political economists technically call "productive" enterprises save, those who are dependent on fixed wages or salaries or stipends do not. The manufacturer, the banker, the tradesman, the business man, in fact, whose effort it is to turn over his capital as many times a year as

possible—these are the people who have built up the saved capital of England, these are the people who save. The salaried or wage classes, on the other hand, among whom, of course, I would include the professional man as well as the manual worker, the barrister and the clergyman, the lawyer and the doctor, the artisan and the peasant, the men of fixed incomes, whether you call them stipends or salaries, or fees or wages—these are the people who do not save. Of course, I am speaking of the class, not of the individual. But then we should remember it is the rule of the business man to invest his savings. It is, in fact, his business to do so. Whereas it is only the exception of the professional man or the labourer to "insure his life." Insurance is the special device of the already thrifty individual. In a word, the people who can "turn over their money" save; the people who can only "lay by their money" do not. Now here, it appears to me, is a principle which, as a country parson, I cannot afford to ignore in any attack that I may attempt upon the pauperism of my parishioners. There is a stronger motive to save created by the desire of investment in the present than by the desire of insurance against the future. In other words, I shall be more sure of success in my attempt to encourage thrift and frugality among my people if I can show them any means of lucrative investment open to those of them who will exercise self-denial and economy, than if I were merely to point out to them the advantages of insuring against the probable misfortunes of the future. It is not, I need hardly say, that I would discourage such efforts at insurance. Penny banks, medical and sick clubs, provident dispensaries, clothing clubs, life insurance societies,—all these, of course, are to be encouraged; they are, indeed, the "working plant," so to speak, of any well-ordered parish. But I still maintain that we do not do well to neglect that incentive to saving which is created by the opportunity of the direct, present investment of savings. And that opportunity may, I think, best be found for the rural labourer in the occupation and cultivation of land. Mr. Blackley's scheme of National Insurance is admirable. It seems possible that some day it may even be carried out, for it has evidently succeeded in firing the imagination of the poor-law reformer. But one thing I am afraid it does not succeed in doing. It does not fire the imagination of the agricultural labourer. The opportunity of occupying land does, and therefore, as it seems to me, it is in providing

that opportunity that we find the natural starting-point, in any successful scheme for the depauperisation of the labouring population. After all, land is the most natural savings' bank of the rural labourer. It is a bank which he understands. He is familiar with its working. He knows something of its system of deposits, its method of exchange, the nature of its reserve fund, of its risks, of the rates of interest which it offers, the value of its securities. In these days of land agitation it may, perhaps, be well to guard myself against any misapprehension. I have no sympathy with revolutionary methods of land reform. Glad as I should be to see the agricultural labourers of England in possession of that incentive to thrift, which is created in the bosom of the French or Belgian peasant by the sense of landed possession; anxious as I am to see such a reform of our land laws as may very largely widen the circle in which the responsibilities of landed property may be exercised; firmly as I believe in the valuable conservative forces which result to any State from a wide extension of property in the soil—still I have no belief in the success of any scheme for the compulsory establishment of peasant proprietorship. At the same time it does seem to me little less than absurd that when we are seeking for means of developing the virtue of thrift in our labouring population, we should shut our eyes to the means by which that virtue has been created in the most thrifty race in Europe. I think we country clergy have a special responsibility in this respect. By our position the majority of us are, if not landlords, at least landholders. We form, in fact, I believe, about a fourth of the resident landed proprietors of the country. Like Tennyson's *Northern Farmer*, therefore, "we owe a duty to the land." Would it not be possible for us, therefore, I would ask, so to manage the property of which we are trustees, that we might give to the rural labourer once more that responsibility of property, from which he has gradually been divorced by the combined action of our land customs and our poor-law? I will not now enter into the practical working of such a scheme, further than to refer you to the Report of the Conference at Oxford, to which I have already referred.*

One word only will I say finally on this subject. No

* Cf. also "The Land and the Labourers," by the present writer. (Sonnenschein & Co.)

scheme for the abolition of pauperism among the rural poor can be successful which does not commence by setting before them an "attainable point of hope." The root virtues of a manly character—self-reliance, self-help, independence, ambition—will never grow in the hard soil of a day-labourer's life, unless they be first watered from the perennial spring of hope. To transpose the old proverb, "While there is hope there is life." Let us find a means of implanting this principle in the bosom of the agricultural labourer, and we may succeed in changing even the dull, grey monotony of his existence into one of—

> "Life, full life,
> Full-flowered, full-fruited, reared from homely earth,
> Rooted in duty, and through long calm years,
> Bearing its load of healthful energies,
> Stretching its arms on all sides; fed with dews
> Of cheerful sacrifice and clouds of care."

III. Closely connected with the subject of Pauperism is the Sanitary question, and one which, in my opinion at least, the parish priest cannot afford to ignore. There seems to be a special fitness, moreover, in such a public duty as that of popularising sanitary science, being undertaken by the Church of Christ; for it cannot be forgotten that it was in a very great measure owing to the influence which the Church exerted upon society in the early ages of Christianity, that the advance which had already been made by society in the knowledge of sanitary science was not only checked but actually thrown back. There is no doubt whatever that up to the time when the Christian Church began to exercise a real influence upon the progress of events in Europe, the immense importance of due attention on the part of the State to the question of public health had been very generally acknowledged.

The vast monuments of aqueducts, streets, and sewers, the remains of baths and fountains in Italy and Greece, abundantly prove what great care had in olden times been taken in this respect. In Rome, as we know, there existed laws which enforced the cleansing and repairing of drains and sewers, and a special officer was empowered to see that those laws were properly enforced. State physicians, answering very much to what we should call "public health officers," existed in almost every town of the empire, in number proportionate to the population. In the largest towns there were ten of these officers, each superintending a district or

subdivision; in towns of the second order there were seven, and in the smaller towns five. Collectively these State physicians formed a college, or general medical council, whose duty it was to supervise everything in connection with the health of the citizens. What we know, too, of the construction, not only of the public buildings, but also of the private houses of the Romans, show them to have been built not without knowledge of the requisites of free ventilation and good drainage. The splendid ruins of aqueducts, still in many cases partly used for their original purposes, attest the munificence with which the chief element, at any rate of public health, was supplied.

Gradually, however, under the influence of Christian teaching, all this became changed. Owing to an utter misconception of doctrine, all proper care for the human body, and as a consequence, all due attention to those conditions upon which the good health of that body depends, became neglected. It was not that the Church of Christ was callous to the sufferings of humanity, or neglectful of the claims of the body, when once that body had become affected by disease or racked by pain; on the other hand, the Church was foremost to alleviate such suffering and pain. But it was that, regarding bodily health as simply nothing in comparison with the paramount importance of the health of the soul, the conditions necessary to the former were ignored. It would, in fact, almost appear as if the care for the sick and needy, which was in one sense so characteristic a feature in the working of the Christian Church, was accepted rather as a duty, meritorious chiefly on account of the distasteful and unpleasant self-discipline which it imposed upon the benefactor, than from any idea of the possible good that might come to the sufferer by his cure and restoration to health. The very same men indeed who, in their devotion to good works and deeds of mercy, were the first to institute hospitals*

* A statement made some time ago by Bishop Lightfoot, in a speech at the opening of the Throat and Ear Hospital, to the effect that "hospitals were the creation of Christianity," was taken exception to by the Rev. A. L. Green, a Jewish Rabbi. Mr. Green, quoting the term "several house," in 2 Kings xv. 5, which, he says, is acknowledged by many theologians to bear the construction of "free hospital," and drawing attention to the fact that the Hebrew prophets, being moral teachers of the people, also exercised curative functions, claims for Judaism, and more especially for the Jewish Scriptures, the first place in the teaching of the Divine laws of universal charity. "The modern hospital," he maintains, "has grown out of the *Domus Dei* institutions established

for the reception of the sick and suffering, had yet, as we know, so little idea of the true nature of disease, that upon the occurrence of any epidemic they immediately received it as an outbreak of God's special anger, to be averted only by prayer and penitence. How great an influence this pernicious doctrine has exerted in retarding the progress of truer conceptions of the nature and cause of disease, it is unnecessary to dwell upon here.

During the last twenty years, however, an immense progress has been made. At the present time sanitary science, or the science of preventive medicine, as it may well be called, occupies a foremost place in the public attention. Much, however, yet remains to be done. The connection between bad sanitary arrangements and bad health is now largely admitted, but it is not fully admitted. Public opinion is partially awake to the importance of the

for sanitary purposes at our chief ports during the period of the Crusades. It was then found necessary to establish such houses to serve as quarantine for those soldiers of the faith who brought little back with them to Europe except the plague; and gradually the character of such and kindred institutions took the form, and in very modern times, of hospitals, —the hospice became the infirmary." Bishop Lightfoot replied to this, very justly, that "however beneficent may be the lessons of humanity taught in the Old Testament, it seems to be a broad fact, written across the face of history, that the name and power of Jesus of Nazareth first made these lessons 'current coin' among the civilized nations of the world;" and cites Mr. Lecky ("European Morals," ii., p. 82) in support of his main propositions that public hospitals did not exist prior to Christianity. A correspondent, however, of the *Daily News* asserts that they existed in India long before Christianity appeared in the world. "Among the edicts of King Asôka (fourth century B.C.), which still exist, inscribed on pillars and graven in the living rock, there occurs one which commands that 'medical aid' should be established throughout his kingdom, together with medicaments of all sorts which are suitable." Nearly seven hundred years after Asôka's death, the Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hian visited India, and found hospitals flourishing at Asôka's city of Patua. "The nobles and landowners of this country have founded hospitals in the city, to which the poor of all countries, the destitute, the cripples, the diseased, may repair for shelter. They receive every kind of requisite help gratuitously. Physicians inspect their diseases, and according to their cases, order them food and drink, decoctions and medicine,—everything, in fact, which may contribute to their ease. When cured, they depart at their own convenience" ("Travels of Fa-Hian," Beal's ed., p. 107). To this we may add that Seneca ("De Ira," lib. i. cap. 16) speaks of institutions called *valetudinaria*, which may, however, have been only private infirmaries. The opinion that the Romans had public hospitals will be found discussed in a book called "Collections Relative to the Systematic Relief of the Poor" (London, 1815); cp. also "Tacit Annal.," xii. 58; "Pliny,' v. 7, x. 79.

question; it is almost convinced that it is time that something should be done, but it is not quite thoroughly awake or thoroughly convinced. It remains, at any rate, that public opinion should be educated to understand clearly what that "something" is, so that it may be prepared to carry out intelligently the various plans which finally may be agreed upon as necessary to ensure a better condition of national health. One of the chief needs of the present day in the matter of sanitary science, it has been truly said, is "by the production of facts and the collision of reasonings, to take a series of the most important subjects affecting the welfare and happiness, not of England alone, but of the whole human race, out of the domain of opinion into that of knowledge."

Now here it appears to me the Church has a great opportunity. If it will but recognise that opportunity, and the duty which that opportunity imposes, it may be the means of affording invaluable aid to the nation. When one remembers, on the one hand, that immense army of human beings annually stricken down in this country by preventible disease, —in plain words, slain either by culpable carelessness or by ignorance scarcely, if at all, less culpable; and when one remembers, on the other hand, the immense engine of influence that might be brought to bear by the pulpits of this land, it does indeed seem lamentable that there should be any hesitation on the part of the Churches to embark in the great work, not only of denouncing that carelessness, but also of instructing that ignorance.

And not only is that so, I think, for the reason which I stated,—namely, that the progress of society in sanitary knowledge was in the early days of Christianity checked and retarded by the action of the Church,—but for reasons more forcible perhaps as bearing directly upon the present position and need of the Church itself. For there can be no doubt, I should imagine, that few things tend so much to neutralise any good effect that might be expected to result from the influence of Christian teaching upon the great masses of the people as the actual physical condition under which those masses pass their existence. Christian teaching must be all but thrown away upon people who are living under conditions where the first principles of morality, cleanliness, and decency are simply impossible. Do any of you remember the words that Charles Dickens put into the mouth of his hero in "Nobody's Story"? They embody, I am sure, the experience

of scores of hard-worked clergymen:—"Oh, what avails it, missionary, to come to me—a man condemned to residence in this fœtid place! Give me my first glimpse of heaven through a little of its light and air: give me pure water: help me to be clean: lighten this heavy atmosphere and heavy life, and then I will hear of Him Whose thoughts were so much with the poor, and who had compassion with all human sorrow."

To any one who believes, as I do most firmly, that the body of man is not only the shrine which contains the soul, but a shrine which, under certain conditions, fashions and modifies the soul itself, there can appear no task more noble, no aim more worthy of the energies of any Church, than that of removing those conditions of ignorance, and squalor, and disease, which are the chief obstacles at present in the way of man's attainment to that fulness and perfection of stature which is the true height of his destiny.

IV. One other subject I will briefly touch upon in conclusion. We may perhaps hope that in time the Church may have learnt new methods of coping with the social difficulties that face us, may succeed in ameliorating the condition of the great human mass with which it has to deal. In the meantime, however, the question arises, "Can nothing be done to brighten and beautify the life as it at present exists?" This is a question which must force itself in one form or another upon every clergyman, and not least, if I may judge by my own experience, upon the country parson. The absence of real pleasure from the life of the village labourer is one of the saddest experiences of the country parish priest. "We live," Wordsworth says, "by admiration, hope, and love," and yet where in the soil of the day labourer's life is there room for those root graces of spiritual existence?

Village life is dull. In winter time especially the hearth of the village ale-shop is too often the only social centre of warmth and light and colour—and of much also, I fear, which is only not dull because it is wicked. What does the average villager know of the pleasures of books, of pictures, of music, of art, of conversation, of all in fact that makes the social life of the classes above him glad and bright?

And yet, surely he ought to know something of the pleasure which God intended that beautiful things should give him. He ought not to be satisfied—at any rate we ought not to be satisfied for him—with only labour and

sleep and feeding. When the work is done, and the sleep is over, and the eating is finished, shall not the man himself presently wake up, and find his spirit afterwards an hungred, and know that it lives not by bread alone?

There is a story told of a clergyman, who wishing to impress an agricultural labourer with some idea of the blessedness of heaven, asked him, what he thought would be a leading question, "What is your highest idea of human happiness?" and got for answer, "A public-house fire roaring up the chimney, and a fiddle going." Was Blake, after all, very far wrong, when, in his "Songs of Experience," he made his village vagabond sing—

> "Dear mother, dear mother, the church is cold;
> But the ale-house is healthy and pleasant and warm.
> Besides, I can tell where I am used well;
> The poor parsons with wind like a blown bladder swell.
>
> "But if at the church they would give us some ale,
> And a pleasant fire our souls to regale,
> We'd sing and we'd pray all the livelong day,
> Nor ever once wish from the church to stray."

One would like not to exaggerate, and yet if we are quite honest with ourselves, is it not just a little difficult to know where to place in the somewhat coarse picture which from experience our imagination is apt to draw of a labourer's idea of pleasant things, the softening lines of beauty and refinement?

And yet surely the ideal of a villager's life need not of necessity be coarse and unlovely?

Can we do nothing to make it a little less colourless and sad? Can we not break its monotony and commonplace with some stimulant which shall not be vicious, with some pleasure which shall not be merely gross and sensual?

These are questions, thank God, for which many earnest hearts are seeking an answer.

"Let us throw open our churches," it is said, "restored and made as beautiful as art can make them, well lighted and warmed; let us give our people cheerful services, heartier music, simpler preaching."

"Let us open workmen's clubs, and temperance coffee-rooms, public-houses in fact where the interest of the public, not the interest of the publican, is the first thought; where the labouring man may have if he will good food and drink, as well as no food and bad drink; where, in a word, he may no longer be forced to ask with Falstaff of old—'Can I

not take mine ease in mine inn, but I must have my pocket picked?'"

"Let us have penny readings and popular science lectures and village concerts and dramatic entertainments."

To all these good answers I want to add one more.

"Let us make our village schoolrooms into picture galleries and museums of art."

The thing after all is not so Utopian as perhaps at first it may sound.

Some sort of germ of art does already exist in many of our schools. Some attempt is already made to brighten the look of the bare walls, by hanging up beside the usual maps and diagrams, illuminated texts of Scripture, coloured German prints in illustration of Bible story—the murder of Abel, Noah's Ark on the top of Ararat, Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt, a graphic illustration of the animals of the world, showing clearly the relative size of the whale and the common housefly, occasional chromo-lithographs from old Christmas numbers of the *Illustrated London News*,—these things, beside their purely didactic purpose, do in some degree also serve to adorn the room and make it brighter and pleasanter for the children.

Well, why not, I would ask, carry this effort after beautiful things a little farther, with perhaps just a little loftier ideal of the province of art as a popular teacher?

Let us try to get into our schools things specially designed for æsthetic purposes—pictures and other works of art selected for the specific end of training the taste of the children. Very beautiful reproductions of good pictures are to be bought now-a-days at no very great price. Portraits of great and good men, of the heroes of our country and other countries, should be hung upon the walls, with some of their wise words or description of their noble deeds written beneath them. They would be a perpetual memory to many of the children, inciting them also to noble endeavour. Busts and casts of beautiful objects might also be placed round the room. A long list of the fine things that are to be got in this way, at the smallest expense, all works of high art, many of which we would place in our drawing-rooms, may be seen in the *Art Directory*, published by the Science and Art Department, price 6*d*. With a schoolroom made beautiful in the way I have suggested, I would endeavour to have some lessons which should distinctly have the object of teaching the children to observe

and love and understand the beautiful things of God's world of nature and man. Here, again, we have the germ of such teaching in our box of form and colour, which all our elementary schools are required to possess, and which so few of our schools, I fear, know how rationally to employ.

But if the schoolrooms are to be made homes of art, in the first instance, for the children's sake, they may be so perhaps for the parents' sake also. Such rooms as I have imagined adorned with pictures and objects of art, well-lighted and warmed, might surely prove centres of pleasant social intercourse for the men and women of our parishes, both rich and poor, and centres of something perhaps even higher than this. Everything that we can do to make people delight in rightness of form and beauty of colour, does something to break the power of that torpor of heart and torpor of mind, which are the devil's two best servants, in his work of making hundreds of thousands of English labouring men irreligious drunkards.*

"Is it after all so very chimerical,"—I quote, in conclusion, the words of Dr. Bridges,† to show you that I do not dwell alone in Utopia,—"to conceive some rich man building somewhere in the east of London a somewhat stately room, not meaner, perhaps, in its proportions than the beautiful hall of the Reform Club—for this is to be a reform club too—and that the walls and corridors should be trusted to a painter and a sculptor for handling of the noblest subjects that human imagination will ever be able to conceive—the growth of social life, symbolically treated as in Homer's 'Shield of Achilles,' and the series of great men who best represent the stream of the noblest human progress? Take, if you can find it, some grander programme for this purpose than is set forth in the historical calendar of Auguste Comte; or take that, if you can find, as I can find, none better; there would be a large agreement between every one on this head, whichever list was chosen. Endow some reader to read at intervals from the great world

* Cf. an excellent and suggestive paper on "Art in Small Towns and Villages," by Mr. T. C. Horsfall, of Manchester. The adoption of Mr. Horsfall's suggestions, which, by the way, are all anticipated in Sir Thomas Wyn's most valuable and most strangely overlooked book on the principles of Education Reform, published in 1836, will now, it is to be hoped, be much facilitated by the formation of the *Art for Schools Association*.

† "The Moral and Social Aspects of Health," a Lecture before the National Health Society.

poets ; some musical choir to render such passages from the great musicians, as being simple and grand and tender, shall take the hearts of all that hear them captive ; finally, from time to time, let some man who knows, by a few simple words, point the moral of the whole—and would you not have in some such scheme as this a civilizing and in the truest sense a health-giving agency? Would it not conduce to the public health, in the narrowest and most superficial as in the widest sense of that word, that something of the pomp and stateliness and dignity and splendour of human life should be brought within reach of the humblest?"

V.

CHRIST AND LIBERTY.*

THERE is an old story about the Patriarch Abraham—whether of Arabian or Persian origin I do not know—which fills up, in its own fantastic way, what the Biblical account has been thought by some to imply dimly, running to this effect:—Terah, the father of Abraham, was a maker and dealer in idols. Being obliged to go from home one day, he left Abraham in charge. An old man came in and asked the price of one of the idols. Abraham asked him how old he was. "Three-score years," he answered. "Three-score years," said Abraham, "and thou wouldest worship a thing my father's slaves made in a few hours? Strange that a man of sixty should bow his grey head to a creature such as that." The man crimsoned with shame, and turned away. Then there came a grave-looking woman to bring an offering to the gods. "Give it them thyself," said Abraham; "thou wilt see how greedily they will eat it." She did so. Abraham then took a hammer, and broke all the idols except the largest, in whose hands he placed the hammer. When Terah returned, he asked, angrily, "What profane wretch has dared to abuse the gods?" "Why," said Abraham, "during thine absence a woman brought yonder food to the gods, and the younger ones began to eat. The old god, enraged at their boldness, took the hammer, and smashed them." "Dost thou mock thy aged father?" said Terah; "do I not know that they can neither eat not move?" "And yet," said Abraham, "thou worshippest them, and wouldst have me worship them too." The story concludes by telling how Terah, in his rage, sent his son to be judged for his atheism before the king, and how Nimrod cast Abraham into a burning fiery furnace.

* This address was one of a course of lectures delivered in St. Edmund's Church, Northampton, in Lent 1882. "Men of any religion or no religion" were invited; and opportunities of discussing the subject matter of each address were given in the schoolroom at the close of the evening service.

I think you will not have much difficulty in seeing the drift of my intention in quoting to you this legend. The fable is a parable. Abraham, it appears to me, is here but the first historical figure in that long line of religious reformers, accounted too often by their immediate contemporaries as atheists, and depravers of the orthodox gods, only to be recognised subsequently, with the primitive patriarch, as, in an especial sense, "*the* friends of the true God."

Every fresh march of knowledge brings with it some phase of what men call atheism. But the sceptics of one age are not seldom found to be the most devout religionists of the next. Christ himself was an atheist and a free-thinker to the Pharisee. The disturbance of an inherited belief can never, I should suppose, be an agreeable experience to any one. And yet—as Mr. Mill, I think, once said—the history of religion, like the history of science, has been the history of exhausted error. In every age of progress the revision of the traditionary creeds has been forced upon men by those advances in life and knowledge with which e ceived traditions are unable at first to reconcile themselves. After a time, however, the traditional restrictions have been broken through, corruptions have been purged away, and, as a final result, the revision of theological belief, which at first could only be regarded with apprehension and fear, comes finally to be accepted with thankfulness and hope, as the necessary displacement of old ideas is seen to result in intrinsically deeper and wider and more real conceptions of the divine ways.

Now there is no denying that we are passing through such an age of revision at the present time. On all sides we see signs of change and adjustment. A new world, both of action and thought, has opened before us. New acquisitions of physical knowledge are daily upsetting old ideas. A general process of overhauling and testing has set in. Antiquated and worn-out doctrines are gradually being eliminated. Old religions, old philosophies, old political systems, are, as the phrase goes, "on their trial." The elementary conditions of life have to be reconsidered. From various points of view, the methods of adjusting these conditions to the necessities of modern civilization have to be undertaken. Lessons derived from the experience of the past must be applied to the new and developing conditions of the future. In a word, a conscious development in social and political conditions has taken the place of an

unconscious evolution. "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God . . . . in hope to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God."

It is because those who are the accredited teachers of Christianity in this place are deeply conscious of this transitional condition of much of the popular theology that they have organised this course of lectures. The subject of "Christ and Liberty," about which I am to speak to you to-night, should, it seems to me, for a special reason, have importance for any body of men who are interested in what are known as Secularists' doctrines.

There are few men who give any serious study to the social problems which of necessity must arise in a democratic state of society like that which we have to-day in England, in which the greatest inequality of condition is found in conjunction with the widest distribution of political power, who do not come sooner or later to see that the solution of the social problems must either precede, or at least coincide with the religious, and that consequently no religion, much less any Church, is likely to make much way with the popular classes which does not place social reform among the most prominent and most important of the religious doctrines which is its mission to preach.

Now it is just here, I think, that the strength of the system of Secularism lies, and I may also say of the system of Positivism, for although that philosophy has not as yet made much progress among the people, it is one, both by its doctrine and by its method, so eminently calculated to do so, when once it has been assimilated by some of the more intelligent of the popular leaders, that I feel sure we are destined to see the social philosophy of Auguste Comte exercising in the future a very marked influence over the course of democratic thought in England, unless indeed, as I for one most cordially hope, the Church of Christ should in the meantime succeed in absorbing what is after all in its main features but a restatement of the Christian doctrine of social duty.

Now it is a continual contention, always implied if not openly expressed, on the part of Secularists, that the social well-being of the people, the upward movement of the non-propertied or labour classes to material welfare, which they regard, and rightly regard, as the most important element of human progress, is continually being obstructed by con-

ceptions of political subserviency and passive obedience to despotic authority, which are directly traceable to Christian doctrine.

It becomes important, therefore, to examine how far such a contention as this is true.

Let us begin, then, at the beginning. You will readily see that it is necessary that we should do so, if we are to avoid that far too common controversial injustice of mistaking the Christianity of Christians for the Christianity of Christ, which is very often quite a different thing.

To my mind, it is one of the most curious instances of the irony of history, that Christianity, against which few accusations have been so often brought as that of fostering a spirit of narrow legalism and clerical assumption of infallibility, should itself have arisen out of a revolt from the clerical and dogmatic spirit in religion. Certainly few things stand out more prominently in the life of Christ than this—that almost from the first He was at open feud with the religious authorities of His day. He, the mildest and gentlest of men, who had a good word for even the publican and the prostitute, had nothing but denunciation and hostility for the Scribes and Pharisees. In language which is certainly not wanting in energy He denounced this all-powerful order as traitors to the cause of human well-being, and poisoners of the wells of the national life. "They took away the key of knowledge from the people, neither entering themselves into the realm of spirit, nor suffering others to do so. They bound heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and laid them on men's shoulders, whilst they themselves were not willing to touch them with one of their fingers." His words finally culminated in such a fiery and bitter denunciation of their hypocrisy and bigotry as drove them to the "necessity," as such men would term it, of putting Him to death.

The political attitude of Christ in this connection has been compared to that of the Roman Gracchi. "As they assailed a close and selfish ruling order by marshalling the people against it, and assuming that peculiar position of authorized agitators which the Roman constitution offered in the tribunate, so did Christ assail the order of legalists." His attitude was in fact that of one of the old prophets of His country. The Jewish prophets have been spoken of by Dean Milman as "the constitutional patriots of the Jewish state." They were in fact the champions of popular liberty

and popular progress, at a time when those virtues met with little regard from either priests or kings. They furnished, as Mr. Mill has shown, that antagonistic element in the national life—the element, that is to say, of free and open discussion—without which it is possible indeed to have order and industry, but not possible to have either improvement or progress.

Now this office, though for some centuries it had been in abeyance, the Jews by no means regarded as being abolished. The reign of the prophets they believed would begin again. And it did begin again in the person of John the Baptist. "For all men," we read,—and the popular plebiscite was one which not even the dominant Pharisaic order dared to disparage,—"all men counted John to be a prophet." To his authority Christ succeeded. Those words which He quoted from the great statesman prophet of his country, when, at the commencement of His public ministry, He stood up for the first time in the synagogue of Nazareth to address the people, show clearly enough how He had appreciated the popular conception of the prophetic office as the champion of freedom and liberty:—

> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
> Because He anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor:
> He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,
> And recovering of sight to the blind,
> To set at liberty them that are bruised,
> To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Nor was this attitude of Christ contradicted by any of His subsequent teaching. Look, for example, at that characteristic watchword so to speak of His message. We are so familiar with the phrase, "Kingdom of God, kingdom of heaven," that we miss much of the meaning it must have had to those upon whose ears it first fell. If we were to translate it into the political phraseology of our own day, I suppose there is no word which would more precisely express the meaning of the Jewish phrase "Kingdom of heaven," than the word "the Revolution," in the sense in which the modern French political philosopher would use it. Certainly much of the New Testament only becomes intelligible when we recognize how intense was the passionate "hope of the redemption of Israel" in the popular heart. Christ and His Apostles were, in fact, surrounded by everything which could tempt human reformers to enter on revolutionary courses; the nation was grievously oppressed

and shamefully degraded, the rulers and princes of Judæa were sensual and cruel tyrants, and their tyranny was supported by a central tyranny equally cruel and sensual. Injustice in the form of Pilate sat on the judgment seat. A foreign soldiery filled the land, "doing violence," "accusing men falsely," "not content with their wages." "So oppressive was the fiscal system, that the name of the collector of taxes was a by-word of loathing and shame; the distress of the people was such that multitudes were ready to follow a teacher into the wilderness, not for the sake of his words, but for the sake of a little bread; and for this oppression there was no appeal to remorse in the breast of the oppressor, or to the tribunal of a civilized world. There seemed no hope but in patriotic arms. Nor was the nation incapable of wielding them. The spirit of Gideon and Judas Maccabæus glowed in it still. It cherished the constant hope of a deliverer."

And the Deliverer came; a radical revolution did take place; an immense transformation of society was brought about. The popular ideal was realized, though not according to the popular idea. The Sermon on the Mount, although it must have seemed little short of mockery to those whose passionate enthusiasm for the redemption of Israel centred in the expectation of a militant Messiah, did in reality contain the popular charter of the world's liberties, did inaugurate as vast a revolution as the world has ever known. To ascribe the heroic character to those citizens of the new kingdom who were not proud and rich, valiant and strong, but meek-hearted, poor in spirit, peace-makers, childlike, innocent, simple, may have come as a chilling disappointment to the popular hopes of His day; yet beneath those Beatitudes of the new kingdom Christ had placed a principle, which has proved itself not only the most powerful solvent of ancient civilization, but also the great motive force in the progressive social order of the present.

Let us look at the matter a little closer. What do we exactly understand by this word "liberty"? Wilhelm von Humbolt long ago defined freedom as a man's right to do whatever he thought proper, so long as he did not thereby interfere with the equal rights of his neighbours. And similarly Mr. Herbert Spencer, in his work on Social Statics, has thus stated the principle of liberty, or the law, as he terms it, of right social relationship:—"Every man has freedom to do all that he wills, provided he infringes not

the equal freedom of any other man." And the steps of the argument by which he reaches that conclusion he himself summarises thus,—"God wills man's happiness. Man's happiness can only be produced by the exercise of his faculties. Then God wills that he should exercise his faculties. But to exercise his faculties, he must have liberty to do all that his faculties naturally impel him to do. Then God intends that he should have that liberty. Therefore he has a *right* to that liberty. This, however, is not the right of one but of all. All are endowed with faculties, all are bound to fulfil the Divine will by exercising them. All therefore must be free to do those things in which the exercise of them consists. That is, all must have rights to liberty of action. Hence there arises necessarily a limitation. For if men have like claims to that freedom which is needful for the exercise of their faculties, then must the freedom of each be bounded by the similar freedom of all. . . . Wherefore," concludes Mr. Spencer, "we arrive at the general proposition, that every man may claim the fullest liberty to exercise his faculties compatible with the possession of like liberty by every other man."

Such is the abstract argument for human liberty as enunciated by the greatest social philosopher of the present day. I need not, however, remind you that the achievement of our liberties has not been left to the accident of a philosophical inquiry. Had we been obliged to trust to abstract considerations, such as those I have quoted, to restrain the undue use of the despotic faculties, I fear we should still, in all probability, have been waiting in vain for Magna Carta.

It is the contention, however, of those who accept the Christian philosophy of history as the true one, that the struggle for liberty, in its various forms, which has in effect been the subject of the civil history of modern Europe since the time of Christ, is directly to be traced to the Christian doctrine of the intrinsic value of the human soul as such. That, it may be said, is a spiritual idea. True; but it is a spiritual idea which easily bears translation into a political one. "The consciousness of freedom," says the German philosopher Hegel, "arose first in religion, in the inmost region of spirit. It is the freedom of spirit which constitutes its essence. . . . Freedom first arose among the Greeks; but they and the Romans likewise knew only that *some* men were free, not man as such. Even Plato and Aristotle

knew not this. . . . That was an idea which came into the world through Christianity, which recognized that the individual as such had an infinite worth."

To trace out historically the development of this principle would evidently be far beyond the limits of our present opportunity, for it would be to tell the history, not only of Christianity, but of modern civilization. The very briefest recollection, however, of some of the prominent facts of social development will be sufficient to remind us how potent an influence the Christian principle of equal freedom has exercised on that development.

Can any one doubt, for example, that the institution of slavery, upon which the civil order both of Greece and Rome was economically based, must have been definitely affected by the Christian doctrine of the inherent dignity of human nature, the witness, that is to say, in behalf of that which is essentially spiritual in all men, apart from all accidental distinctions of status or condition? It is true that the beneficial influence of the Christian Church upon slavery was very slow in its action,—slavery lasted in Europe down to the thirteenth century,—yet of the final result there surely could be no doubt, so long as both Christian slave and Christian freeman were equally taught, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God;" "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God," "partakers of the divine nature;" "He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth. There is no distinction of Jew or Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, for in one Spirit were ye all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Similarly can we doubt that that conception of family life which in modern times we regard as the surest guarantee for the social happiness and moral progress of man would have been much more difficult of realization, had not that same Christian principle of equal freedom and individual responsibility succeeded in abolishing the despotism of paternal power, which was the dominant idea in the domestic life of Græco-Roman civilization? Or again, when we remember that social contention among the disciples, which Christ rebuked with the words—"The rulers of the Gentiles have lordship over them; and they that have authority over them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but

he that is greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve," does there seem anything but what is most consonant with His spirit and with the genius of His religion, in the ready adaptation of the democratic municipal system of the proconsular towns of Asia Minor to the needs of primitive church organization, or in the adoption of the principle of merit, rather than the principle of birth (which Jewish analogy would have suggested), in the constitution of the Christian priesthood, or in the attempt to find a settlement of doctrine by popular appeal, which gave its origin to the earliest ecclesiastical councils? And although it cannot, of course, be denied that much of the early independence of Christian character died away as the democratic tendencies of primitive church polity gradually gave way before the monarchical idea, which was the hereditary instinct of Rome, yet what impartial student of history will deny, that in the crisis of the great change, when Roman civilization was declining before the repeated attacks of the Germanic races, it was the Christian Church which went forth once more "into that wilderness of the peoples," and found sympathetic response in Teutonic hearts for a new reading of their own characteristic virtues of liberty and loyalty, which has formed the basis of all that is most stable in the social order of the present?

In the history of our own country, do you forget that the political principle of representation, which is the radical doctrine of true democratic government,—and remember that the union of the democratic principle with representative government is an entirely modern fact, which throws out of court all interested appeals to the failure of the democratic principle in ancient history,—is directly to be traced to the action of the Christian Church in England. The Church in this country—I summarise the eloquent words in which the historian of our constitution has recounted the early debt of the English nation to the English Church—"has been not only the agency by which Christianity was brought to a heathen people, a herald of spiritual blessings and glorious hope in another life; it has been not merely the tamer of cruel natures, the civilizer of the rude, the cultivator of the waste places, the educator, the guide, and the protector, whose guardianship was the only safeguard of the woman, the child, and the slave, against the tyranny of their lord and master. The Church has been this in many other countries besides Britain, but here it has been

much more. The unity of the Church in England was the pattern of the unity of the State; the cohesion of the Church was for ages the substitute for the cohesion which the divided nation was unable otherwise to realize. Strong in its own conformation, it was more than a match for the despotic rule of the early kings, and was the guardian of liberties as well as the defence of the oppressed. It was to an extraordinary degree a national Church—national in its comprehensiveness as well as its exclusiveness. Englishmen were in their lay aspect Mercians or West-Saxons; only in their ecclesiastical relations could they feel themselves fellow-countrymen and fellow-subjects. . . . The ecclesiastical and the national spirit thus growing into one another supplied something, at least, of that strong passive power which the Norman despotism was unable to break. The churches were schools and nurses of patriots, depositories of old traditional glories, and the refuge of the persecuted. The English clergy supplied the basis of the strength of Anselm, when the Norman bishops sided with the king. They trained the English people for the time when the kings should court their support and purchase their adherence by the restoration of liberties that would otherwise have been forgotten. The unity of the Church was, in the early period, the only working unity; and its liberty, in the evil days that followed, the only form in which the traditions of the ancient freedom lingered. It was again to be the tie between the conquered and the conquerors; to give to the oppressed a hold on the conscience of the despot; to win new liberties, and revive the old; to incite Norman and Englishmen in the resistance to tyrants; and educate the growing nation for its distant destiny as the teacher and herald of freedom to all the world."*

Nor, again, are you in this town, I suppose, likely to forget that it was at Northampton, in the year 1214, that Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, overtook King John in his futile march against the north-country barons, and endeavoured to persuade him of the justice of those demands for political liberty and self-government which six months later were embodied, under his leadership, in the great charter of liberties signed at Runnymede. And if you remember this, you ought not in justice surely to forget that it was an English churchman who organised

* Stubbs' "Constitutional History," vol. i., p. 245.

that great national movement for freedom which culminated in the signing of Magna Carta, refusing to separate the liberty of the Church from the liberty of the nation, but upholding that "the cause of the people was alone worthy to be considered (I use his own phrase) as the cause of God and of the Holy Church." *

Nor ought we to forget the influence that was exerted by the Church of Christ in this country as a director of those new forces by which society has gradually been reconstituted on an industrial rather than a military basis; how, for example, at that time in our history which is known as the Epoch of the Peasant Revolt, when the cultivation of the soil was passing into a new phase under feudal influences and there seemed no security that the serf might not relapse once more into the condition of the slave, the Church interposed, and not only prevented any such backward tendency, but prepared the way for that complete emancipation of the serf which has resulted in his transformation into the free

* "In one of those remarkable essays by a great historian who has been carried away from us all too soon, it has been pointed out that the ancient character of the Archbishops of Canterbury was to be the tribunes of the people. He says that the palace at Lambeth was placed exactly opposite the ancient palace of the kings, so that the Archbishop of Canterbury might be able to speak to the stern barons, the strong courtiers, and sometimes tyrannous kings in the name of the people; that he should be able to represent the cause of the people in the very centre of the government. It was for this object that he had given to him his place and position in the realm, so that he might speak for the people and the poor. This has been the traditional policy and the character of the See of Canterbury. Exceptions there may have been, but that is the spirit which runs through the whole line; and we pray God that this may continue to the end. No people have been more loyal to the Throne than the Archbishops of Canterbury. They have gone down with the Throne; they have died for it, and this they have done for the people. Here I am sure you understand how it was they came to do so, because I see there is such a happy union between the ecclesiastical and civic dignitaries of this city. (Cheers.) It was intended when cathedral chapters and the great corporations were originally formed that they should stand side by side, as we, the mayor and myself, stand side by side to-day—(loud cheers)—and that there should be in all things brotherly love and mutual co-operation. The first remarkable charter of England's liberty was given by William the Conqueror to the city of London. It runs thus:—'From William the king, to William the bishop and Gosfrith the portreeve,'—that is the old title for mayor. He charges them with one thing—'I will that ye be worthy of all the law which ye had in the time of King Edward.' That is to say, he gave them no new liberties, but promised to preserve to them their past."—*Reply of Archbishop Benson to the Address of the Mayor and Citizens of Canterbury the day before his Enthronization.*

labourer of modern times; or how, at a later time, that same influence was exerted in fostering the growth of the early guilds and industrial corporations, which, whatever may have been their subsequent evil effects, were the necessary agents in the creation, at the epoch of the enfranchisement of towns, of that industrial property springing from labour which from that time has had a position in our social system, independent of and rivalling that territorial property whose origin and constitution is purely military.

Nor, to bring this far too rapid historical summary to a conclusion, is it necessary for me to remind you how that same Christian principle of individual freedom was the systematic organ of emancipation, alike in the two great transformations of authority which belong respectively to the 16th and the 18th centuries. The elevation of the human individual to freedom, in the one case under the dogma of the right of private judgment, and in the other under the declaration of the rights of man, was alike the truth to which the Protestant Reformation bore witness in the religious sphere, and the French Revolution in the civil.

In thus endeavouring to trace back to Christian principles the law of equal freedom, I cannot suppose that I shall have carried with me the convictions of all my hearers. Some of your objections, I trust, will find expression in the discussion which is to take place this evening. One possible objection, however, I will venture to anticipate in a few sentences before I close.

It may be said, "In claiming, as you have done, a Christian parentage for that principle of equal freedom, which in so many ways we must all recognize as the mother idea of modern civilization, have you not entirely forgotten those evil chapters of ecclesiastical history in which, as Macaulay said, 'the Church was the servile handmaid of monarchy and the steady enemy of public liberty'?" No; I have not forgotten them. It is only that I have also not forgotten those two cautions with which I set out,—

First, to distinguish always between the Christianity of the Church and the Christianity of Christ.

And, secondly, to acknowledge frankly that those who have been the most steadfast opponents of ecclesiastical Christianity have often been the truest exponents of the spirit of Christ.

While, therefore, I am not prepared to deny that the triumph of liberty has at times seemed to have been effected

contrary to the Church and contrary to the clergy, I *am* prepared to deny that it has ever been effected contrary to Christ. There are those here present, I know, who are not prepared to recognize in Him, as I do, the world's Redeemer, the Son of the Living God, the Divine Educator of humanity, who is ever leading the world on to new destinies, who, by His Spirit, is ever revealing new elements of social progress, new conceptions of social duty. I cannot, therefore, appeal to you as holding that faith. But I would ask you honestly to say, whether any of those who claim your allegiance as champions of liberty, liberators of thought, tribunes of the people, social reformers, have a higher claim to those titles than He who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate. For this I think I know, that unless you can accept Him as your Leader in the secular work of the world that now is, you will never accept Him as your Guide to any world that is to come. You will never realize Christ as the Son of God until you have realized Him as the Son of man.

It is on this ground, then, that the appeal must be made. And I do not hesitate to say that the Church which will not make its appeal on this ground is distinctly disloyal to its Master and its mission.

The Church of the Present, if it would prove itself to be what it claims to be, the Church of Christ, must learn to work out the lofty and sublime idea of which the power of the Church in the Middle Ages was the grand but false expression, and to rescue the truth which the Church of the Past perverted, by declaring to man that divine purpose by which, "in the dispensation of the fulness of times," all things shall be "gathered together in Christ," whether politics or morals, whether art or poetry or science, "whether things which are in heaven or things which are in earth." It is for her to claim the kingdoms of this world as the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ; not as in mediæval days by making secular laws give way to the Church, but by bringing all laws under the control of the Christian spirit. It is for her to teach men that they are best co-operating with Christ's design of converting into an earthly reality that vision of a kingdom of heaven which He has revealed in their hearts, when they make secular pursuits a spiritual occupation. In a word, it is for her to declare that in that divine plan for the perfecting of the full stature of humanity, the law of life for the society as

well as for the individual, is the law of liberty and of progress, and that so profound and so wide-spread is the confederacy of the powers of good, that no failure, and no series of failures, can ever leave uncertain the final supremacy of Christ over all human life.

And if this is the duty of the Church in face of those unsolved problems of society and of religion, to which, as I at least believe, Christianity still holds the key, what is your duty, working men of Northamption, who do not, so some people tells us, hold this faith. You may not perhaps grant me the right to tell you that, but this at least I think you will let me say to you: Have nothing to do with any theology which tells you of a God who has gifted His creatures with lofty faculties and powers, chiefly that they may be uncultivated and undeveloped. Have nothing to do with any religion which fails to explain to you your own lives, or to direct your own practice in this year 1882, however well it may have been adapted to the lives and practices of men living in the year 82. Have nothing to do with any Church which does not have some word to say about God's righteous government of this present world, as well as of the world to come. But at the same time, working men, do not conclude that a theology which recognises a righteous and fatherly Will as the ground of the universe must be false because there are theologians who appear to consider that the devil, and not God, rules the world. Do not conclude that a religion which professes a spirit of self-sacrifice as its central doctrine, and a spirit of liberty, brotherhood, and fellowship as its most prominent characteristics, is necessarily valueless, because the so-called religious world is too often self-righteous rather than loving, narrow and exclusive rather than all-embracing and liberal. Do not conclude that a Church, which in intention at least is a "Holy Commune," whose watchword is not "the accumulation of wealth through self-interest and competition, but human progress and well-being, through self-sacrifice and association," must be unfit for the present age, because there have been Churchmen who have loved rank and wealth, and have cared more for the value of their livings than the lives of their followers, or because the enemies of freedom and light have sometimes found the clergy ready to lend "sanction to their own bad causes, and to dress up obscurantism and servility in preachers' phrases and imaginary Bible precedents."

VI.

CHRIST AND FREE-THOUGHT.*

MAY I begin with a parable? In the seventh book of Plato's Republic, Socrates, engaged in a discussion on the nature of right education and the distinction between genuine and counterfeit knowledge, that is, as he defines it, between *science* and *opinion*, is represented as making the following comparison :—

"'Imagine,' he says, 'a number of men living in an underground cavernous chamber, with an entrance open to the light, extending along the entire length of the cavern, in which they had been confined from their childhood, with their legs and necks so shackled that they are obliged to sit still and look straight forward because their chains render it impossible for them to turn their heads round; and imagine a bright fire burning some way off, above and behind them, and an elevated roadway passing between the fire and the prisoners, with a low wall built along it, like the screens which conjurors put up in front of their audience, and above which they exhibit their wonders.

"'I have it,' replied Glaucon.

"'Also figure to yourself a number of persons walking behind this wall, and carrying with them statues of men and images of other animals, wrought in wood and stone and all kind of materials, together with various other articles which overtop the wall; and, as you might expect, let some of the passers-by be talking and others silent.'

"'You are describing a strange scene, and strange prisoners.'

"'No, they resemble us,' Socrates replied. 'For let me ask you . . . Whether persons so confined could have seen anything of themselves or of each other, beyond the shadows thrown by the fire upon the part of the cavern facing them?'

* This address was one of a course of "Lectures for the People," delivered under the auspices of the Guild of S. Matthew, in the Shakespeare Hall, Old Street, St. Luke's.

"'Certainly not. . . . .'

"'Then surely such persons would hold the shadows of those manufactured articles to be the only realities.'

"'Without a doubt they would.'

"'Now, consider what would happen if . . . we suppose one of them to have been released, and compelled suddenly to stand up, and turn his neck round and walk with open eyes towards the light; and let us suppose that he goes through all these actions with pain, and that the dazzling splendour renders him incapable of discerning those objects of which he used formerly to see the shadows. What answer should you expect him to make, if some one were to tell him that in those days he was watching foolish phantoms, but that now he is somewhat nearer to reality, and is turned towards things more real, and sees more correctly: above all, if he were to point out to him the several objects that are passing by, and question him, and compel him to answer what they are? Should you not expect him to be puzzled to regard his old visions as truer than the objects now forced upon his notice? . . . When he recalls to his mind his first habitation and the wisdom of the place, and his own fellow-prisoners, do you not think he will congratulate himself on the change, and pity them? . . . And then consider what would happen if such a man were to descend again, and seat himself on his old seat.'"

I need not carry the story any further. I am sure you already catch the drift of Socrates' parable "of the revolution of a soul" which has traversed the road leading from the shadow-land of mere opinion and unreal superstition, into the upper daylight of Truth and Reality. Beside the lesson which he distinctly draws, that "the sensible man will recollect that the eye may be confused in two distinct ways, and from two distinct causes,—that is to say, by sudden transitions either from light to darkness, or from darkness to light," the parable has obvious other lessons not altogether inappropriate, I think, to our position of controversy to-night. I pray you do not think, however, that I am desirous of pointing any moral for you which I am not ready to accept for myself. I have told you the story mainly by way of assuring you that I am not blind to the possibility that either one or other of us may be in the position of Plato's "cave-men." At the outset, at any rate, of my remarks, I hope you will not be ungenerous enough to predicate that possibility of the lecturer.

So much, then, as to the spirit in which I would approach the discussion of this subject.

One word as to the method. And, first, as to definition of terms.

I forget whether it was Mr. Mill who once said, that if theologians, before entering into controversy, could only be made to agree upon the definition of the terms which they were about to employ, any need for controversy at all would, in the majority of cases, be removed altogether. Whether that assertion is absolutely true or not I will not pretend to say. I am sure, however, you will all agree with me, that in any discussion it is very desirable that the area of possible misapprehension should not be extended by any confusion as to the sense in which the principal terms under debate are held by either one side or the other.

Who then do we mean by *Christ?* and what do we mean by *Free-thought?*

Let me say at once, plainly, that by *Christ* I do not mean "Christians," or "the Bible." It is necessary to insist upon this distinction, for I have found, in reading through the various tracts and publications issued by the Free-thought Publishing Company, bearing more or less on this subject, that there is a continual tendency on the part of Secularist writers to speak of the Christianity of Christ and the Christianity of Christians, as if they were one and the same thing; and also to make the Christianity of Christ responsible not only for the character and conduct of His more immediate followers, but also for the very variable theological and political principles to be found in the religious history of His country, through something like twenty centuries before His birth.

Let us be quite clear, then, on these points. I cannot for a moment allow that the Christianity of Christians, as we have it at all periods of its history, can be accepted always as a fair exponent of the spirit of Christ Himself. And in saying this, of course I do not wish for a moment to deny that it is fair to infer something as to the spirit of the Teacher from the conduct and character of His professed disciples. But we must not infer too much. And it is, I think, inferring too much to say, as in effect Mr. Symes for example does in his pamphlet on "Christianity as a Persecuting Religion," that because the Spanish Christians in Mexico and South America committed the most appalling and inhuman atrocities in the name of Christianity, that therefore their religion was a true

exponent of the spirit of Jesus Christ. If we are to judge of the character of the Master by the conduct of His disciples, I think we have at least a right to demand that the most worthy disciples should be chosen as a basis of judgment. That is a postulate of debate which I at least must take leave to claim. It is one, moreover, I should imagine, quite as likely to be important to the Freethinker as to the Christian.

Then, again, as to the Bible. I confess it has been a cause of some surprise to me to find that Secularists, in much of their textual criticism of the Scriptures, are as bark-bound by a stupid literalism of interpretation as the narrowest of Christian sectaries. Indeed, in reading through the Secularist tracts, I have more than once been reminded of an incident that occurred to a fellow curate of mine some years ago in Sheffield. I remember on one occasion, in the course of parochial visitation, he found himself in the midst of a heated religious controversy between two old women, who were endeavouring to settle some knotty point of every-day casuistry by quoting texts of Scripture one against the other. "Why," he said, by way of diverting them from a point of dispute which threatened to become more than academic, "when do you suppose the Bible was written?" "Ah, sir, I don't know," replied one; "I suppose it came in with them there Acts of Parliament." "Nay!" triumphantly retorted the other, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself. To think you didn't know as how the Bible was writ long afore the world was made!"

Now, seriously, is it not altogether idle and unprofitable to enter into controversy of this kind unless we are prepared to accept such a conception of the Biblical records as shall stand the test of historical criticism?

For my own part, at any rate, I have no intention of accepting controversy on any other terms. For example, to speak of the Bible as of one book is, to my mind, an absurdity worthy only of controversialists of the mental calibre of my old women at Sheffield.

The Bible is not a single book; it is a library. True, a library dealing for the most part with the literature of one nation, and that a nation dominated, so to say, by the haunting sense of a unique mission, but still a library, the books of which vary as much in their spirit and *morale* as they do in the dates of their origin and the variety of their authorship. Each volume, therefore, in that library must be

studied, not as a mere collection of texts to be used in a controversy, but as an organic whole, as you would study any other book having a history of its own, fashioned by the environment in the midst of which its authors lived. To quote texts from Exodus, Leviticus, or the Book of Kings, therefore, as a proof of the persecuting spirit of Christianity, as Mr. Symes and other Secularist writers do, is about as rational a method of argument, to my mind, as it would be to judge of the English national sentiment of to-day by extracts taken from the Saxon "*Ormulum*," the "*Brut of Layamon*," or the "Chronicles of William of Malmesbury."

Do let us try to be as reasonable as we can. Of course I am well aware that it is not so much, perhaps, the Secularist advocate as the Christian apologist himself who has too often been to blame in this matter. The heterodox disputant has only too carefully followed the lead of his more orthodox brother.

I am not concerned, however, to-night to defend the methods of the orthodox. I want, as far as I may be able, to get at the method of truth.

The second postulate of debate, therefore, for which I ask is this,—That we shall bring to the interpretation of the Bible the same amount of critical fairness and acumen which we are accustomed to give to the interpretation of any other literature; and that concerning any special book in that literature we shall not form our judgment by the consideration of detached sentences apart from the general spirit and aims of the context.

You will readily see how these two postulates affect the answer to the question I proposed just now—who Christ was.

Briefly, then, you may take my own position broadly to be as follows:—After making every allowance for the errors and interpolations which modern textual criticism of the New Testament has shown to be necessary, after giving full weight to the inference fairly deducible from a comparison of their contents, that the first three Gospels, at any rate, as we have them now, must be referred to an original oral tradition antecedent to any of them, still my own belief remains unshaken that in the Christian records, so interpreted, we have a solid and indestructible groundwork of historic fact, upon which there stands the figure of a man of life and character, unique, it is true, in history, but as

complete, as consistent, and as real as that of any other historical personage of antiquity. From those early Christian records, also, it is possible, I believe, to put together a body of doctrine, exhibiting a distinct and original method of teaching, full of a characteristic inward penetrativeness of style, bringing home spiritual truth to the hearts and consciences of men, not by an appeal to conventional maxims or codes of conduct, but to lucid, universal principles of right action; full, also, of an individual charm and the attraction of an intense personal sympathy between the Teacher and the taught, the memory of which survived long after the death of the Teacher, in a special badge of spiritual comradeship, forming the only rational explanation of much of the subsequent history of the Christian Church.

From these records, also, of course I do not conceal from you that I myself claim to have learnt more than this of the nature and mission of Jesus Christ. But more than this I do not think it is necessary for the purposes of the present lecture to insist upon to-night. I know very well that you will never consent to accept Jesus Christ as the true Son of God unless you have first learnt to realize Him as a true son of man. And it is with that purely human side of His character that we are alone, as I understand, concerned to-night.

Let us pass to our second question, What do we mean by Free-thought.

In the programme of the National Secular Society, of which Mr. Bradlaugh is the President, I find the following definitions:—

"1. By the principles of Free-thought is meant the exercise of the understanding upon relevant facts, and independently of penal or priestly intimidation.

"2. By the rights of Free-thought are meant the liberty of free criticism for the security of truth and the liberty of free publicity for the extension of truth."

I think this wording is a little clumsy—I am afraid I do not quite understand the exact force of the expression "relevant facts" in the first proposition;—but apart from this there appears to be nothing which I should not for myself be perfectly ready to subscribe as a declaration of my own belief.

To my mind, however, a more definite and forcible description of the true aims of Free-thought is to be found in the following quotation from Mr. Holyoake. I take it

from an article on "Secularism" which he wrote some years ago for *Chambers' Encyclopedia.*

"Secularism," he says, "commences by laying down the proposition that intelligent sincerity is sinless. It does not maintain that even intelligent sincerity is errorless, but that it is without conscious guilt, even when it is, as it may be, dangerously mistaken. The conscience thus educated, thought may be entrusted to inquire, and the search for truth may be begun.

"Secularism takes the term 'Free-thought' as expressing the central idea which it inculcates. It defines Free-thought as the unrestricted application of the powers of the intellect to any subject—the absence of any threat or penalty, legal, spiritual, or social, for the exercise of thought. The Free-thought it inculcates is not lawless thought, it is guided by methods of logic, limited by evidence, checked at every step by experience, which is omnipresent and corrected by the results of science. Free-thought is not the rebellion but the judicial action of the understanding. Reason, the faculty of following the pathway of facts, does not despise intuition nor instinct, nor the voice of nature, nor authority; it uses, but it revises them: it does not pretend to be infallible, but to be the best arbiter we have. It holds that scepticism is the pathway to affirmative truth. So far from being a crime, scepticism is scrutiny. So far from being the end, it is the beginning of inquiry—the first condition for the recognition of unknown truth. . . . To the conception of Free-thought is also necessary the free publication of opinion . . . and free criticism. But it is clear that the use of Free-thought may be a nuisance, a terror, or an outrage, unless courtesy takes care of it. . . . Secularism therefore imposes upon the action of Free-thought the limit that every-one shall concede to others the liberty he claims for himself, and shall permit to others, and shall recognise in each individual liberty of action in all things by which others are neither injured nor damaged."

In addition to these definitions of Free-thought, I think it may be useful to quote here the four distinct propositions in which Mr. Mill, in his *Essay on Liberty*, sums up with characteristic point and brevity the results of his argument in favour of unlimited freedom of opinion :—.

"*First*, if any opinion is compelled to silence, that opinion may, for aught we can certainly know, be true. To deny this is to assume our own infallibility.

"*Secondly*, though the silenced opinion be an error, it may, and very commonly does, contain a portion of truth; and since the general or prevailing opinion is rarely or never the whole truth, it is only by the collision of adverse opinions that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied.

"*Thirdly*, if even the received opinion be not only true, but the whole truth, unless it is suffered to be and actually is vigorously and earnestly contested, it will by most of those who receive it be held in the manner of a prejudice, with little comprehension or feeling of its rational grounds.

"*Fourthly*, the meaning of the doctrine itself will be in danger of being lost or enfeebled and deprived of its vital effect on the character and conduct; the dogma becoming a merely formal profession, inefficacious for good, but cumbering the ground and preventing the growth of any real and heartfelt conviction from reason or personal experience."

To these propositions, either by way of contradiction or limitation, there is no need, I think, to add anything further. Let us proceed at once, then, to consider how far the truths formulated in these propositions are affected by the doctrine and spirit of Christ's Religion.

If I am to take the publications of the Free-thought Publishing Company as giving a fair exposition of their opinions, I shall not be wrong, I think, in taking it to be the contention of the majority of Secularists that to the claims of Free-thought Jesus Christ is directly opposed.* I, on the other hand, am prepared to maintain that in Jesus Christ we have, not only the Originator of the most far-reaching social revolution, but also the truest Champion of Free-thought and Liberator of the human spirit from the cramping shackles of spiritual despotism and arbitrary authority whom the world has yet seen.

Let me endeavour to justify, as far as I may be able, this contention.

And, first, I think, you will all be ready to acknowledge

* I cannot pretend, of course, to have read all those publications, but I have read a good many. I may perhaps name three as having been more especially under my notice in writing this lecture—the pamphlets *What did Jesus Teach?* by Mr. Bradlaugh; *Christianity essentially a Persecuting Religion*, by Mr. Symes; and the chapter in the second part of the *Freethinkers' Text Book*, entitled "Christian Morality Fallible," by Mrs. Besant.

how necessary it is to any fair interpretation of Christ's teaching that we should first have made some effort to gain a clear and connected notion of the historical moment and situation with which He had to deal. To make even a slight sketch of the whole situation of things, as pre-supposed by the Gospels, would, of course, be impossible within the limits of the present lecture. There is one prominent feature, however, in that religious situation which it is absolutely impossible to ignore, if we are to form any adequate conception of Christ's own position. I mean the character of the influence exercised over the religious world of His day by that class of persons who are called in the Gospels "the Scribes and Pharisees." Our sources of information about the Pharisees are threefold:—First, the Christian records; second, the writings of Josephus, who was himself a Pharisee, and who, in each of his three works, professes to give a direct account of their opinions,—an account, however, which, as it is manifestly written in accommodation with Greek ideas, requires re-translating, as it were, into Hebrew conceptions; and, thirdly, the first portion of the Talmud, called the Mishna, or Second Law.*

The fundamental principle of the Pharisaic system is laid down in the first chapter of that treatise. The Mishna—I quote from Mr. Taylor's edition—opens with this statement: "Moses received the Thorah from Sinai, and delivered it to Jehoshua, and Jehoshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets to the men of the great synagogue. They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment, and raise up many disciples, and make a fence to the Thorah."

It was of this oral or traditional part of the Thorah that the order of the Scribes, of which we read in the New Testament, were the conservators. Originally appointed to "keep a fence about the Law," to study carefully the text of the

* The Mishna, which is, in fact, a digest of the Jewish traditions and a compendium of the whole Ritual Law, was reduced to writing in its present form by Rabbi Jehudah, who lived in the second century. It is chiefly known to scholars by the German translation of Jost, published at Berlin in 1832. A new edition, edited from a unique MS. preserved in the University Library at Cambridge, has just been published by the Cambridge Press. For the ordinary English reader, however, the most accessible and interesting account of the Mishna treatises is to be found in a book entitled "The Sayings of the Jewish Fathers," by Mr. Taylor, and in two brilliant and scholarly articles on the Talmud, published in the *Quarterly Review*, by the late Emmanuel Deutsch.

old records, to transcribe and collect the old manuscripts with the most scrupulous precision, they had gradually come to take a position in connection with the Law from which their earlier representatives would have shrunk with horror. Their idolatry of the letter of the old Law had, in fact, been destructive of the reverence in which it originated. The infinite variety of life, moreover, presented cases which, naturally, the unchangeable Law had not contemplated. All possible cases could not be brought within its range, or decided by its authority. Circumstances forced the Scribes to become casuists. Decisions accumulated. An element of the *lex non scripta*, or, as we should say now-a-days, of Common Law, grew up side by side with the codified or Statute Law. The new precepts, fitting better into the lives of men than the old, soon practically took their places. At the time of Christ "the words of the Scribes" had come to be honoured above the Law itself: "The commandments of God they made of none effect by their traditions." Finally, the maxim was openly taught—"The voice of the Rabbi, the voice of God."

Their casuistry also became subtle and prurient, evading the plainest duties, tampering with conscience, absolutely inverting the right relation of moral and ceremonial. By a natural law of evolution, evidence of the existence of which is not wanting in our own day, the Traditionalist became the Ritualist. They learnt to treat men like children, formalizing and defining the very minutest particulars of ceremonial observances.

Let me help you to fill up the picture of the Pharisaic Scribe, as you may gather it from the Gospel record, with one or two instances taken from the Jewish traditions.

The sages of the Great Synagogue it was said had classified all the separate commandments of the ceremonial and moral law, and had reached this result:—There were 248 affirmative precepts, being exactly the number of the members in the human body; and 365 negative precepts, being exactly the number of the arteries and veins, and also the number of the days in the year; the total being 613, which was exactly the number of letters in the Hebrew version of the ten commandments. The same numerical result was reached by an interpretation of Numb. xv. 38, where the Jews are commanded to wear fringes on the corners of their taliths, which fringes were to be bound with a thread of blue. Now as each fringe had eight threads

and five knots, and the letters of the word signifying "fringe" made 600, the total number of commandments evidently reached, as before, the number of 613. Now mark the importance of all this scriptural commentary. When Rabbi Joseph asked Rabbi Joseph Ben Rabba which commandment his father had taught him to consider the greatest commandment in the Law, he replied, "The law about tassels. Once, when, in descending a ladder, my father trod on one of the threads, and tore it, he would not move from the place until it was repaired."

Take another instance. One of the most celebrated and elaborate decisions of Rabbi Hillel—an undoubtedly great and good man indeed, as some have even ventured to say, the master of whom Jesus was a disciple—was on a trumpery series of questions as to whether it was lawful or not to eat an egg which a hen had laid on a feast-day, when the feast-day happened to succeed the Sabbath. This momentous question gives its name Bitsa (an egg) to an entire Book of the Talmud. Hillel's final decision is that the egg must not be eaten. For, he said, Moses, in Exodus v. 16, says, "On the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in." Now an egg laid on a particular day must be considered to have been prepared the day before, so an egg laid on a feast-day following a Sabbath might not be eaten, because it was prepared on the Sabbath, and the eating of it would involve a breach of the Sabbath.

There is no need to multiply further puerilities such as these. It seems strange that the people should have been duped by such absurdity. But duped for the most part they undoubtedly were. The Pharisaic order seems to have been held in the very highest esteem. The ascending titles, Rab, Rabbi, Rabban—we are reminded of our own Reverend, Very Reverend, Right Reverend—mark the steps on the social ladder. They liked to hear the sound of these titles, to exaggerate the distinction of their dress, to have the chief place in the synagogue, the first couch at the dinner-party, to be greeted obsequiously by their followers in public places, to wear longer robes than other people, with broader blue fringes and more ostentatious ornaments. All these things go to make up the picture of the Pharisaic Scribe—conceited, pompous, childish. Now what was the attitude of Christ towards this class of persons? Undoubtedly it was one of unrelenting hostility.

We are all familiar, with the well-known invective,

in which, in language full of concentrated passion and biting sarcasm, He denounced the all-powerful order in a succession of woes, reiterating many times the charge of oppression, hypocrisy, pedantry, and imposture. It was this denunciation, in fact, which sealed His fate, and finally determined the legalist and clerical party to lay their plot against His life.

Mr. Symes, in his pamphlet on *Christianity as a persecuting Religion*, specially draws attention to this denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees, and maintains that, in those utterances, Christ distinctly exhibited the malignant spirit of the persecutor.

Can you honestly think so? I confess it seems to me much more like the spirit of a tribune of the people and a champion of Free-thought.

There are times and occasions surely when men do well to be angry. There is a selfish bitterness of heart no doubt to which the spirit of true religion and the spirit of Christ must ever be hostile. But is there not also an unselfish anger, a fiery passion of indignation, which the spirit of true religion tends to create, and to which the example of Christ distinctly lends its sanction?

There are some things in this world, surely, which should receive no quarter from any of us. If an intolerant anger against all who do wrong to human beings, if the "scorn for miserable aims that end in self," if an ever implacable enmity to tyrants and oppressors, if bitterness against sophistry, superstition, and self-complacent bigotry, if irreconcilable hostility to every form of imposture counterfeiting truth, if all this is to be condemned as "exhibiting the malignant spirit of the persecutor," then I fear you must condemn not only Jesus Christ, but all the long line of those chosen heroes of free action and free thought,—all those who have won for their fellows, at the price of their own heart's blood, the franchises of the mind and soul, amongst whom perhaps may be found not a few of those who would give no allegiance to Him, whom yet I venture to claim as their true leader. No; Shelley was not wrong when he sang his *Masque of Anarchy*, nor Shakespeare when, in his *Henry V.*, he paints the almost apocalyptic wrath of the king towards those who would belittle the loyalty of man and the high traditions of humanity.

The controversy between Christ and the Pharisees it is true was, indeed, a very personal one; but personal mainly

in the sense in which it was a revival of the old controversy between the prophet and the priest, the controversy old as the Jewish theocracy, still young to-day, that religion consisted not in traditions maintained by books or priests, but in that active and ardent enthusiasm which comes from an indwelling spirit of truth and goodness, in sincere obedience to which every man may safely become "a law unto himself." The root of the controversy, then, between the Scribes and Pharisees and Christ was, in a word, this,—they asserted the paramount importance of particular rules, and denied the existence of a present spirit; He announced the doctrine of a present spirit, superseding the necessity of particular rules. They believed that the inspiring power which had dwelt in the hearts of the prophets of old as a resistless pressure and conviction of thought was withdrawn, and the dead letter of the traditional law had taken its place; He proclaimed that that inspiring power was not only not withdrawn, but should be given to the coming generations in far greater measure than to any that had gone before.

So direct, then, was the opposition of Christ's method to that of the Pharisees. He taught not as the Scribes, but with authority; not with the authority of dogma, but with the authority of truth. "Because it was written," was their doctrine. "If I speak the truth, why do ye not believe Me?" was Christ's. It was true not because He said it: He said it because it was true.

Have you ever seriously considered how far-reaching in its consequences is teaching such as this? Do not let your long familiarity with the old Scripture phrases, or, worse still, the narrow interpretations too often put on those phrases, blind you to all the consequences of such a doctrine as this central one of Christ's message. The proclamation of the free Spirit of Truth, open to all men, was no dogma or gratuitous proposition of cloistered wisdom or learned exclusiveness, not to be revealed rashly to the common people, but to be left slowly to permeate mankind. No; that was not Christ's thought. "Those people who know not the law are cursed," was not His word. The common people heard Him gladly, because He appealed to the common heart of man. To the mere claims of long descent He gave scant reverence. Those were Abraham's children who were like their father in character. "God and the people!"—that is the watchword of all great revolutions. It was the watchword of Christ. From His disciples He asked

no conditions, save that their hearts should be free and natural; no special training save that their souls should be free from convention. That they were *men*—fisherman or rabbi or publican—was enough for Him. If thoughts were to live, they must be such, He knew, as would move the common people. It was such a thought, then, I maintain, when in the realm of religion He claimed, as against the authority of the cultured clique of the Scribe and Pharisee, the freedom of spirit for all men. It is that thought, transferred from the realm of religion to that of politics, which proved the most powerful solvent of ancient civilization.

When we read, for example, such words as these, "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God;" "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed;" "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," can any candid reader deny that "we are face to face" with teaching "pregnant," as Hegel says, "with an elastic energy of rebound against all the adventitious appliances with which the human soul can be burdened."

We have no time left to-night for even the brief historical appeal which would, in my opinion at least, show this to be true.

There are two points, however, involving something more of detailed criticism of Christ's teaching, upon which, before I conclude, I am desirous of saying one or two words. A year ago, when I lectured for this guild on the cognate subject of "Christ and Liberty," questions were asked by one or two speakers by way of objection to the main contention of my lecture, the points of which, I think, I shall not unfairly represent if I reduce to these two :—First, does the lecturer believe that a man will be punished for sincerity, if, as a result of such sincerity, he should be led to disbelieve the doctrines of Christ? And, secondly, how, in that connection, would he explain such texts as that in Matt. x. 15: "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city"? (viz., the city which rejects Christ's doctrine); and the text in Mark xvi. 16: "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned"?

Now, before I can answer the first question, I am obliged to ask another, namely this—"What do you mean by punished?"

If you mean by "punished," that the sincere disbeliever will be punished for his disbelief, in the sense that he will be consigned by an angry God to eternal torture in a material hell, then my answer is simple: No; I do not believe it. On the contrary, of such a creed I would hardly hesitate to say, with the hero of Mr. Tennyson's poem,

"The God of love and of hate, together they cannot be thought;
If there be such a God, may the great God curse him and bring him to nought."

Certainly, I believe, as unhesitatingly as any Secularist can do, in the sinlessness of intelligent sincerity.

On the other hand, if by "punished" you mean that the sincere disbeliever must suffer the natural consequences of his disbelief, then, again, my answer is simple: Yes, most certainly I think so. But what is the natural consequence of disbelief? That must depend on the nature of the thing concerning which belief is demanded. If the thing is a good thing, disbelief in it must entail loss of that good thing, and continued disbelief, continued loss *ad infinitum*. Punishment for disbelief in this sense is not something conventionally attached to such conduct, either in this world or the next, or any that may follow, but something inherent in such conduct. God does not need to go out of His way to punish either wrong-doing or wrong-thinking. The infringement of His laws work out their own punishment. His laws, remember, are essentially different to the laws of men. God is not, as some people would have us believe, a judge after the type of Mr. Justice North. There are no conventional vindictive punishments in the Divine government. Divine punishment is not, therefore, the execution of a sentence, but the occurrence of an effect. It is mainly owing to the fact that in much of our popular theology men have failed to appreciate this distinction that so many of our present difficulties on the subject of eternal punishment have arisen. Men are always trying to translate God's methods of working by the analogy of their own methods, forgetting, as Mr. Mill once finely said, that, "to think that God *is* as we can think of Him, is the deepest blasphemy."

I hope we are coming to more Christian views on this matter. For my part, at any rate, I desire as earnestly as any Secularist can—

"That the light of a Sun that is coming may scatter the ghosts of the past,
And the cramping creeds that have maddened the people may vanish at last."

Then, as to those two other texts, I confess I can find in them nothing about sincere disbelievers.

The passage quoted from St. Matthew is evidently the same as that given at much fuller length in St. Luke; and no candid reader, I think, of the whole context could easily miss the hint as to the true interpretation of Christ's own spirit, which is given by the fact that His commission to the seventy, in which occurs the passage to which objection is taken, is prefaced by the incident of the two disciples desiring Christ to call down fire from Heaven upon the Samaritan city which had refused to receive Him, and His own rebuke of their bigoted intolerance, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of, for the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them," and is immediately followed by the parable of the Good Samaritan, surely one of the noblest homilies on religious toleration which the world has ever heard.

Then, lastly, as to the passage in Mark xvi. 16: "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." In the first place, if you turn to the Revised Version, you will see the statement in the margin that the paragraph in which this verse occurs is not to be found in the oldest manuscripts, and that, therefore, there is more than a doubt whether those words were ever really said by Christ at all; and, secondly, even if that were not so, you will see that the word rendered "damned" in the Old Version has been rightly translated "condemned" in the New Version, and is, in fact, the same word which has elsewhere been more correctly rendered "judged," carrying with it, in the Greek, moreover, no sense of "eternal punishment" in the first meaning of that phrase which I just now gave.

Finally, I would ask you in this connection to pause for a moment while I collect these characteristic sayings of Christ as given for the most part by St. John: "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice" (xviii. 37). "I am come a Light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me may not abide in the darkness; and if any man hear My sayings, and keep them not, I judge him not" (mark, it is the same word elsewhere rendered "damn"—"I damn him not"), "for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth Me and receiveth not My

sayings, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (xii. 46). "He that believeth not hath been judged already. . . . and this *is* the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil" (iii. 19). Let me add but one saying more (Matt. xii. 31): "Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit (of truth) shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Spirit of holiness, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age, nor in that which is to come."

I began with a parable from Plato. Let me end with one from Milton.

"Truth, indeed, came once in the world with her Divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on; but when He ascended, and His apostles after Him were laid asleep, then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who, as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon, with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good Osiris, took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since the good friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down, gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. *We have not yet found them all.*" *

* *Areopagitica.*

VII.

CHRISTIAN SECULARISM.*

"Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."—ROMANS xii. 11.

"BE a downright time-server"! said an old bishop of our Church, preaching upon this text. The comment is somewhat startling. Nor is its appropriateness quite obvious at first sight. But it appears that there is another reading of the text found in several of the oldest manuscripts, which seems to alter materially the character of this well-known maxim of St. Paul.

"Be servers of the time"! (τῷ καιρῷ instead of τῳ κυρίῳ δουλεύοντες) is the translation of this new reading—"Seize the present opportunity." At first perhaps to our ears the new version has not quite so inspiriting a sound as the old one. We naturally think of a "time-server," to say the least, as of one who is mean, servile, contemptible. Two hundred years ago, however, the word did not carry with it that idea. It was quite as often used in an honourable as a dishonourable sense. At any rate, if this new reading is the true one—and those who are competent to judge seem to think so—it is impossible for St. Paul to have meant his maxim to have anything mean or servile about it. Very likely some of the ancient proverbs, such as "Carpe diem," καιρον γνωθι, "Take occasion by the forelock," "Be the slave of opportunity," were in his mind, and he wished to Christianise them. It was very like him to do so. He was very fond of "sanctifying," so to say, some shrewd worldly maxim. And I think it is so here. "Be a downright time-server" means something very much the opposite of mean and paltry. Do your duty in the present, the duty which lies nearest you, as Carlyle used to say. Be earnest,

* Preached in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Coventry.

religiously sincere at your daily work. Don't think religion has got to do only with the future. Learn to do your life-work, whatever it may be, as a Divine service. Be a downright godly server of your time.

> "Trust no future, howe'er pleasant,
> Let the dead past bury its dead;
> Act, act in the living present,
> Heart within and God o'erhead."

That is a reading of the text, I think, which no Christian need be ashamed to adopt.

It is a great puzzle, I know, to some people to know how rightly to adjust the claims of heaven and earth upon their thoughts and upon their time—how much to give to the duties and interests of the present, how much to preparation for the future; how much to spiritual matters, how much to secular; how much to devotion, how much to work.

Now this maxim of St. Paul is evidently an encouragement to those who solve the problem in this way, who say, the surest way to get to heaven is to think little about it; to do your duty in this world scrupulously and earnestly is the safest guarantee of ability to do duty in any world that is to come. Secular work after all is the best training-ground for the spiritual affections. Industrial religion is the true nurse of spiritual religion. First that which is natural, afterwards that which is spiritual.

I do not think that is quite a complete solution of the problem, but still I think it is perhaps the solution upon which, just at present, it is most useful to lay stress.

The practical business,—I do not say the ultimate end,—but the practical business of the religious instructor nowadays, it seems to me, is this:—to get men to regard their daily work as a religious matter, as in a very true sense a Divine service: to make men see that whatever may be the spiritual aspects of religion, it has also its secular, its industrial side: in a word, to identify devotion with duty, and religion with goodness.

It is upon this aspect of our daily life-work that I propose to speak to you for a short time to-night,—what I might venture to call, perhaps, religious time-serving, or Christian secularism.

You will all remember, I am sure, the character of Caleb Garth in George Eliot's "Middlemarch." He seems to me an almost perfect example of what I call the industrially

religious man. In many respects that book is a very melancholy one. Indeed, the character of Caleb Garth—the happy, eager, unselfish land-surveyor—is almost the only gleam of real sunshine in its pages. Let me quote to you one or two sentences from that scene at the Garths' breakfast-table, when Caleb has just received a letter offering him work—the management of Mr. Brookes' estates.

"It is a fine bit of work!" he says to his wife. "A man without a family would be glad to do it for nothing. . . . It's a fine thing to come to a man, when he's seen into the nature of business: to have the chance of getting a bit of the country into a good fettle, as they say, and putting men into the right way with their farming, and getting a bit of good contriving and solid building done, that those who are living and those who come after will be better for. I'd sooner have it than a fortune. I hold it the most honourable work there is."

Here Caleb laid down his letters, thrust his fingers between the buttons of his waistcoat, and sat upright; but presently proceeded, with some awe in his voice, and moving his head slowly aside, "It's a great gift of God, wife."

"It's a great gift of God."

I think Caleb Garth is almost my ideal Christian. He is so generous, so delicate-minded, so sensitively honourable, such a skilful workman. His great ambition is to "set things to rights," and that is so Christian.

Why, what was Jesus Christ's work and mission in this world but just that?—to set things to rights—to put things in order. That was "His Father's business," His "great gift of God." "Doing justice" was the Old Testament word; preaching the gospel of the kingdom the New Testament one; and setting things to rights, putting things in order, must, I think, be the modern equivalent. "He went about preaching the gospel of the kingdom," we read, "and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."

By His whole life and doctrine Jesus Christ strove to open and unveil to man the heavenly and Divine order which lies at the root of all society.

The object of the Christian religion is to make men conscious of God's presence always and in everything; to believe in the reign of God, as well as the reign of law; to say of their everyday work and business, "It's a great gift of God.'

We want more, I venture to say, of this kind of Christianity nowadays,—a religion which would see God in everything,—"in our work and in our play, in our politics and our science, our home life and our social life,"—a religion which would consider it no more profane to speak of Christ on the Stock Exchange, Christ in the Education Office, Christ in the counting-house, Christ in Coventry, than to speak of Christ at the carpenter's bench at Nazareth. The truth is, we manufacture our profanity with great care. We utterly isolate our work from Christ, and then tell Christ that our work is not fit for Him to touch.

The fact is, the so-called religious world habitually takes far too low, too narrow a view of what being religious is. And we have most of us acquiesced in that opinion somewhat too complaisantly.

For example: I heard only the other day of a gentleman —an exceedingly intelligent gentleman in most respects— who had actually withdrawn his name from the Committee of the Working Men's Club and Institute Union, because, as he said, "the movement had no definite religious aspect."

Now, what in the world was that gentleman's conception of religion?

I believe his own explanation was something of this kind. Originally, he had joined the Union with a general idea that he was doing good by supporting a Society for promoting, in various ways, the social and moral welfare of the working classes. Subsequently, however, he discovered the Society's method of working to be entirely secular, and not at all religious;—that is to say, that although its programme suggested such things as the establishment of clubs for purposes of recreation, of mutual sympathy, and friendly intercourse, the promotion of classes for mutual improvement and instruction, not a word was said about spiritual agencies such as Bible-classes, and prayer-meetings, and attendance at the public means of grace. Accordingly, he withdrew his countenance from the Society.

Now I am afraid that gentleman is by no means alone in his opinion. Indeed I think he represents a very large segment of society, especially in that division of his of human affairs into things spiritual and things secular.

It is a good thing that the majority of men's actions in such matters are generally very much in advance of their creeds. For is it not very evident that the common opinion

is this? That mankind in the mass—in the proportion of thousands to one—have quite failed to attain to anything of what is called true religion. In labour, in commerce, in law, in medicine, in literature, in sculpture, in painting, poetry, music, is it not the constant doctrine or implication of the pulpit, that there is no religion, no spiritual virtue, nothing accordant with the gospel of Christ? Men in the midst of business and daily work may *attain* to a Divine life; but are not the pursuits themselves regarded as having nothing, strictly speaking, to do with religious life, as having in them no elements of spiritual good—as having in them no tendency to advance religion and goodness in the world? This life, the life that is, is laid under a dark ban. "Not religious" is the summary phrase which is written across man's secular and industrial life, as if not religious meant in the least degree the same thing as irreligious. Against this division of human life we most earnestly protest.

Life is one. You have no right to say to people social life, secular life, industrial life is one thing, and spiritual life, religious life is quite another. And man is one. You cannot dismember his soul, and divide it in halves, and so contrive that part of it shall be kept for secular work, and part for religious work, that one half shall be used when he is buying and selling on a week-day, and the other half when he is praying or singing on Sunday.

I think it was Mr. Justice Stephen who said the other day very truly: "Every act is spiritual, every power is spiritual. Whether a man is saying his prayers, or buying an estate, it is he the spirit or soul which prays or buys."

And if we are to have a spiritual religion, which is only another way of saying a real one, it must be a religion which will be just as much present with us, influencing our conduct when we are buying an estate as when we are saying our prayers. Religion must not be with us what Milton calls it in one of his tracts, "a dividual movable," a thing that can be carried abroad, or left behind at home, or more likely perhaps in church with the hymn-books and hassocks, as occasion may require.

The true religion is the religion which really helps on human progress, using that word in its truest and highest sense. Whatever helps to carry out God's intentions for man, co-operates with God's design, works towards His ideal, must be religious.

In a word, holiness is help, and sin is hindrance. Does

not holy mean helpful—the Holy Spirit, the Helpful Spirit? The fruits of the Holy Spirit, it is true, are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, patience, goodness. But as it has been truly pointed out: "They are the fruits of the Spirit in whatever forms they are likely to be found, whether the love is the love of a woman nursing a fretful child, or the long-suffering is that of the man harassed and worried with the vexing details of business, or the gentleness is that of the doctor following the dark mazes of a fever, or the patience is that of the mechanic fitting the joints and valves of a steam-engine." The Holy Spirit is the Helpful Spirit.

"A servant with this clause"—as quaint old George Herbert's lines go—

> "A servant with this clause
> Makes drudgery Divine,
> Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws,
> Makes that and the action fine.
>
> "This is the famous stone
> That turneth all to gold,
> For that which God doth touch and own
> Cannot for less be told."

The spirit of helpfulness underlies every other principle whatever in the religious life. In God's plan for the world every man's help is needed, every man has his fit place, and every man's work has its due influence on the final result. It is not the philanthropist and the missionary and the religious recluse who alone co-operate with God's design; but every man, who, toiling in an honest calling, does his work in a pious and conscientious spirit, and recognises his daily business, whatever it may be, as "a great gift of God."

Perhaps by this time some of you may be inclined to say, "This is not our view of religion." Well, I am very sorry. But we will not quarrel about that. Is it your view of your daily work? Take it in that light, and consider whether such a belief as I have tried to describe would not have a very practical, a very *religious* result on the conduct of your lives, if sincerely held and conscientiously followed.

Let me illustrate my meaning by a practical consideration.

England, during the last year or two, has been suffering from great trade depression. In Coventry, as elsewhere, doubtless that fact has been brought home to the heart and the pocket of many a business man. Well, those who have made a study of such questions tell you that the great cause of this depression has been over-trading and over-

production, that that is the great evil, and that it must be avoided in future. I do not say, for I do not know, and if I did this would hardly be the place to express an opinion, whether this has been the great evil or not. But this I do venture to say, that if this has been the evil, it will probably not be avoided in future. And why, you ask?

Because there is an evil beneath the evil alleged; and that is an excessive desire for property, an eager passion for "making a fortune," as it is called, in a few years.

"Ah!" perhaps you say, "that is an old pulpit cry! We who are sensible business men have often had to listen to wholesale denunciations of wealth and riches, and so far from always accepting them as just, we have very often felt ourselves right in resenting them as the mere conventional tirades of ignorance and inexperience."

No doubt you have often been right in this respect.

No teacher—still to discriminate—who was wise would have any right to indulge in any such denunciation of riches. He ought to know how necessary the accumulation of wealth has been to the progress of civilization. He ought to know that so far from that accumulation being necessarily the root of all evil, it has been something very much the reverse. In fact, many of the virtues of which Christianity makes her boast are in reality quite as much owing to the development of commerce and industry as to the direct teaching of Christianity.

Truthfulness, veracity, fidelity to engagements, thrift, order, sobriety, moderation, self-restraint, patient industry, are all forms of virtue, fostered and promoted by the trading or industrial spirit.

But although the Christian teacher may grant all this and more, he cannot blind himself to the terrible influences which the abundance and love of earthly possession exercise too often in enervating the soul, and incapacitating it for all high enterprise and self-denying effort.

Is not the Christian teacher bound to denounce quite as unmercifully as Christ Himself the rich man whose riches "blind him to the far higher value of spiritual aims and intellectual enjoyments: whose luxury and lavish expenditure make life difficult for all around him: whose ostentation is an evil and a temptation to those who take him for their model: to whom wealth is not a grand means, a solemn trust, and a grave responsibility, but merely a source of sensual indulgence and vacant worthlessness"?

Can the Christian teacher in these days be said to be doing his duty when in face of the daily revelations of our courts of law, fastening their stigma on names hitherto held in honour, the crooked balance sheets, the cruel adulteration, the lying advertisement, he is silent on the undue passion for wealth? He may not know much perhaps of business life, and what are technically called commercial transactions, but I daresay he knows enough to be able to say that at a certain point speculation ought to be called by another name—that it should be called theft, and theft of the most evil sort. For it has been truly said: "Theft involving deliberative intellect and absence of passion is the purest type of wilful iniquity."

Now don't you think it would make some difference to the conduct of the business man if, as he read the money articles in his newspaper to-morrow morning, something of Caleb Garth's spirit could come over his breakfast-table meditations: if he had learnt to say to himself now and then—"This business of mine is a great gift of God, it brings with it great material gains, but also do not let me forget great moral responsibilities—it is a means not merely of laying up a store of wealth for my own selfish enjoyment, but a means of helping on God's plan for the general wealth of the world. He has appointed industry, action, effort, to be the spring of improvement; let me strive therefore to gain this end with wisdom and moderation. For others, business may be a mere expedient to gain a fortune, a race run for a prize—a game played for a great stake when success hangs upon the cast of a die; for me may it rather be a training ground of virtue, a school where lessons are to be learned for eternity"?

Don't you think, I say, that such meditations as these would make themselves felt in the subsequent transactions of the week?

And not only the immediate future, but the whole course of life, and its end, would, I venture to think, gain a new character under the inspiration of such thoughts.

Strive then, I beseech you, to gain this sense of your daily work, as a "great gift of God." Strive to be "downright time-servers," Christian secularists in the best and highest sense, men determined at least that their work, whatever it may be, however humble or however lofty, shall be so done as to help on the world's progress towards the very distant it may be, but never uncertain final victory of good.

Believe me, man can have no higher inspiration than that —to be a fellow-worker with God.

And as to the Reward. Well, perhaps you had better not think too much about that. The best workers are never those, remember, who are always thinking about their wages. Indeed, the best work never was yet done for wages, but for love only, the only true reward after all of work being more work. "Heaven itself is only work to surer issues." You know what the poet sings of a noble man dead:

> "How can we doubt that for one so true,
> There must be other nobler work to do?".

Live your life then truly and well, not for wages, but for love.

Live for Love. Love of God, love of Christ. Think of your Master. You can trust *Him*. *He* will not leave you out in the cold and darkness at last: but if you live a brave life of righteousness here, He will welcome you to that home beyond with the sweet smile of love and the wreath of immortality.

> "Live and love,
> Doing both nobly, because lowlily.
> Live and work, strongly because patiently,
> And for the deed of death, trust it to God,
> That it be well done, unrepented of,
> And not to loss."*

* Mrs. Browning's "Aurora Leigh."

VIII.

SOCIAL SALVATION.

"*Thy kingdom come . . . on earth!*"—MATT vi. 10.

MR. RUSKIN, in certain letters to the clergy, which some of you may have very likely read in a late number of the *Contemporary Review*, has been showing what very mistaken ideas most of us entertain of the true nature of the pastoral office. He tells us that the clergy are far too much occupied in trying "to get wicked poor people to go to church," to the neglect of their real work, which is "to keep wicked rich people out of church."

Great moral teachers, I suppose, are always more or less paradoxical. And so, if we can only profit by the lesson he really desires to teach us, we may afford, I think, to pardon Mr. Ruskin the form in which he has chosen to convey it. At any rate, it may not be altogether waste of time this evening if we try to put Mr. Ruskin's lesson in a somewhat more courteous form, and instead of asking ourselves "Why wicked poor people do not go to church?" we ask, "Why other people, rich or poor, good or bad, do?"

What, after all, is the object of going to church? Why, for example, do you come here to-night?

That is a simple question, and should not be difficult to answer.

And yet I think it is very doubtful whether the individual members of our Christian congregations often do ask themselves this question, "What is the exact object of the congregation? What is the exact purpose for which I am accustomed to sit in this pew more or less regularly?"

We have come here to-night to perform what we call Divine service. Now service surely implies hard work.

What hard work have you and I been performing to-ight?

It is true we have joined together in a great many prayers to God, and that no doubt is hard work enough if we have really been in earnest about the matter; for spiritual earnestness implies intense concentration of thought, and concentrated thought is very hard work indeed.

But granted that we have strenuously prayed and sung hymns, and listened to the Lessons, in what true sense can we call that Divine service, serving, working for God? Prayer, at any rate, means, for most people at least, just the opposite of that; means that they want God to work for them, not that they want to work for God. Begging is not serving, and God likes mere beggars, I should fancy, just as little as we do. He wants honest servants, real workers, not beggars; men who have learnt at least that word of their Master, when He said that to serve Godc onsisted not in saying (or even singing, accompanied by the best music), "Lord, Lord! but in doing the will of the Father."

Or suppose I put the question in another form.

What do you consider to be the object of the Christian Church?

If you each answered quite honestly, I expect your answers would be wonderfully diverse. And that question evidently includes the other; for the object of going to church can only be to fulfil the object of the Church. What, then, is the object of the Church of Christ?

For my own part it always seems to me that the best answer to that question is to be found in those words in which the Evangelist sums up the work of Christ in this world: "Jesus went about preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."

There are those, of course, who prefer speaking of the Gospel which Jesus Christ preached, and the Gospel which the Church of Christ has, therefore, to preach, as the Gospel of "salvation," not as the Gospel of the "kingdom." But what do you mean by salvation?

"To be saved" means one of two things in the popular mind. Either it is to be taken as meaning salvation from future punishment in the world to come, or salvation from sin in the world that is.

Amongst instructed Christians doubtless there may be few nowadays who willingly accept that idea of salvation which should imply the mere saving of our souls from future torment; yet that conception is certainly not entirely absent

from the educated classes; and amongst the non-educated and ill-instructed it is, if not perhaps the only, certainly the leading idea conveyed by the word. Indeed, I am sure we cannot well over-estimate the evil that this most incomplete conception of salvation has had upon the religious life and the moral conduct of thousands.

It has been my duty to stand by the bedside of not a few dying people of the ill-instructed classes, and I must honestly confess that upon more than one occasion I have been not a little surprised at the calm confidence evidently felt by those who stood by, neighbours and relatives, that all was as it should be with the soul hovering on the brink of eternity. God forbid that I should seem for a moment to cast a doubt on the infinite love of our heavenly Father. Whatever else may be doubtful, *that* cannot fail any one of us, either in this world or any world to come. Hope that all may yet be well, I should have no right, I believe, to quench by the death-bed of even the unrepentant. But the calm confidence that all is now as it should be, that at any rate cannot be right. When we inquire what it is that has given strength to that confidence, we shall generally find that it is the utterance on the part of the sufferer of some few words, perhaps "Lord, have mercy upon me," gasped during the last moments that life yet lingers. God forbid, I repeat, that I should seem to doubt that that prayer is not heard by Him whose ear is never closed.

But surely we do wrong to foster the idea that all that Christ came to give us of salvation was what was gained by that death-bed prayer. But that is the only idea, I have often felt, entertained by those to whose confidence I have alluded.

The only conception of salvation to which hundreds of people attain is one corresponding to that idea of conversion which holds so prominent a place in some theologies. To be saved is to be converted. And conversion is a sudden catastrophe, so to speak, in the soul, as strange and mysterious to all former experience as would be some mystery of magnetism, an electric shock, to one who had never before felt it. Salvation is thus regarded as a mysterious something imposed upon us from outside, on account of our faith, as a reward for believing something, or even, as alas! it would appear in the cases to which I have alluded, as a reward for saying something.

Or look at the matter in another aspect.

I happened to be talking the other day to an exceedingly good and amiable lady, when she startled me by the following curious and naïve remark:—"I don't think I am in the least what you would call a really religious person; to be frank, I don't feel a bit religious. And yet I don't feel as if I were very wicked. I am sure I should be very miserable if I were to do an untrue or dishonest thing. I wouldn't hurt a living creature by deed or word if I could help it."

Now it is quite plain that in that lady's idea religion is in itself something quite different, quite distinguishable, at any rate, from what the world would ordinarily call "goodness." "To be good" and "to be religious" were evidently not regarded as anything like identical phrases. Now is that a very uncommon idea? To say that any one is religious no doubt carries with it some idea of a character for goodness. But to say that a man is a good man does not equally carry with it as a necessity an idea of religion. "The state of salvation" which belongs to the religious man is evidently regarded as something in its nature different from the state of goodness which belongs to the simply good man. There is something radically wrong in this distinction. Is it not a course most unreal and misleading to speak of perfectly similar characters or perfectly similar actions as "religious" on the one hand, and simply "good" or "moral" on the other, as one is speaking of the characters or actions of Christians or non-Christians, intending those terms to carry with them, moreover, a clear indication of relative merit as apparent to the eye of God?

When will people really understand that what Christ came into the world to do, was not to teach men a new way of being good, or doing good, but to supply us with a new and powerful motive for both being and doing good in the old way? Religion has been defined by Mr. Matthew Arnold as "morality tinged with emotion," and we may accept the definition, if he will allow us to further define "emotion" as the energising motive to right action which is supplied by "the constraining love of Christ."

I hope you will not think that I am leaving all this time the question with which we set out with only a partial answer. Let us go back to the words with which our Master Himself was accustomed to speak of his mission and work. "And Jesus went about preaching the gospel of the kingdom."

A gospel of salvation no doubt it was, but did not the

good news consist mainly in this, that Jesus Christ revealed to man the Divine order under which he was living, proclaimed a fatherly will as the origin of all life in the universe, exhibited in His own sacrificial life and death a perfect conformity to that will, announced the presence of a Spirit, seeking to raise, reform, educate man, to emancipate him from his animal and selfish nature, to deliver, to *save* him from the suspicions and vanities and unrighteousness which set him at enmity with his neighbours and his God? The gospel of the kingdom has this good news, at least for man, that notwithstanding all the existing injustice and unrighteousness, notwithstanding all the prevailing disorder and cruelty and oppression in the world, notwithstanding all the evils that we see around us eating into the heart of society—our ignorance, our disease, our drunkenness, our social impurity, our pauperism, our crime,—that notwithstanding all these there is yet over all a Divine Ruler, who looks down upon the earth with no careless eye, who as a loving Father watches over His creatures, yearns to deliver them from the misery and disorder into which, through wilfulness, they have fallen, and who, because He has loved them through all, has sent His Son into the world to reconcile it unto Himself, to bring it back again to its lost allegiance, who promised to send His Holy Spirit, not this time to brood with creative energy over a material world formless and void, but to call out of social and moral chaos a kingdom of righteousness, of peace, of joy, of order. The gospel of the kingdom, the good news of a present all-ruling, all-loving God,—this is the message of Jesus Christ.

In a word, the object of the Christian religion is to make men conscious of God's presence always and everywhere. That is perhaps a definition of Christianity which might not quite satisfy the theologians. But that is the definition of one of God's truest workers, who, though she is not a theologian, many of us, I doubt not, would trust for a definition of real practical religion far more than many theologians.

"Christianity," said Florence Nightingale not long ago, —"Christianity is to see God in everything, to find Him out in everything, in the order or laws as of His moral or spiritual, so of His political or social, and so of His physical worlds . . . to Christ God was everything—to us He seems nothing—almost if not quite nothing, or if He is anything, He is only the God of Sundays, and only the God of

Sundays as far as going to what we call our prayers, not the God of our week-days,-our business and our play, our politics and our science, our home life and our social life; our House of Commons, our Government, our post-office and correspondence—such an enormous item in these days—our Foreign Office and our Indian Office. . . . The kingdom of heaven is within, but we must also make it without."

There I think you have the answer to the question with which we set out. "The kingdom of heaven is within, but we must also make it without." To realise the kingdom of heaven within, and then to make it without, that is the true Divine service. That is the work which you and I as members of a Christian congregation have got to perform. If we do not succeed in helping one another to do that, we palpably fail in accomplishing the chief object of our coming to this place. If the Church above all else is not a centre of help it is utterly useless and absurd.

What are you doing then, as a Christian congregation, to make the kingdom of heaven *without* in this place, in this parish?

What are you doing—if I may take those great social problems, to which I have just alluded, as an example—what are you doing to diminish that great cloud of pauperism which broods over this richest of the countries of the earth, not merely by giving away money, but by learning and teaching something of those great economic laws which help people to make money and to save it? What are you doing to abolish drunkenness with all its foul brood of folly and sensuality and crime, not merely by preaching up pure water, but by preaching down bad air, and bad houses, and bad beer? What are you doing to solve the problem of social purity, not only by drawing aside the clean robe of your respectability from the defiling touch of the outcast woman, but by guarding your own family hearth from the polluting approach of the profligate man? What are you doing to soften the bitterness of social revolt, and to heal the almost standing feud between capital and labour, not merely by preaching to the labouring class the great duty of content in that state of life in which they may please to find themselves, but by asking yourself how far you may have contributed towards putting them there, and you may be doing, by larger and more vivid conceptions of social obligations, to raise the moral tone of commerce and trade and manufacture?

Let us ask these questions both as a congregation and as individuals. And if you ask me where you are to begin this work, I will not answer you in any other words than these—"As you save so shall you be saved. No man can work out his own salvation otherwise than by working for the salvation of others"; and by reading you this sonnet of a recent poet, whereof the lesson may well be left to each man to apply to his own heart:—

"The lost days of my life, until to-day
What were they, could I see them on the street
Lie as they fell? Would they be ears of wheat
Sown once for food, but trodden into clay?
Or golden coins squandered, and still to pay?
Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet?
Or such spilt water as in dreams must cheat
The undying throats of hell, athirst alway?
I do not see them here, but after death
God knows I know the faces I shall see,
Each one a murdered self, with low last breath.
'I am thyself—what hast thou done to me?'
'And I—and I—thyself' (lo! each one saith),
'And thou thyself to all Eternity?'"*

* D. G. Rossetti, "The House of Life."

IX.

THE CONTAGION OF TRUST.

"Charity believeth all things."—1 Cor. xiii. 17.

I WAS reading the other night Shakespeare's play of *Julius Cæsar*. Most of you I have no doubt will remember the character of Brutus in that play. There are few purer or loftier spirits in the whole range of Shakespearean creation. Two striking lines uttered by Brutus just before his death suggested to me the subject about which I propose to speak to you for a short time this evening. You will find the words if you care to turn to your Shakespeare when you go home, quite at the end of the play. They are these,—

> "Countrymen,
> My heart doth joy that yet in all my life,
> I found no man but he was true to me."

Now the question which occurred to me when I read those lines, and which I would venture to ask you to put to yourselves, is this :—

"Why was it that Brutus in all his life had never found a man untrue to him? Was it that his experience of human life was exceptional, that circumstances had thrown him only among men of warm generosity and transparent truthfulness? or, was the secret to be found in his own character? Was it that before the childlike trustfulness and simplicity of heart of 'that noblest Roman of them all,' even otherwise faithless men were shamed into fidelity? Was it that before his grand innocence and simpleness of soul even meditated treachery was disarmed? Did the very frankness of Brutus' trust, the very force of his expectation of 'good faith' in others, tend to create that virtue, where it did not already exist?"

That at any rate is the explanation which commends

itself to my mind. I take then as my subject to-night The Contagious Power of Trust.

We are accustomed to speak of the object of Jesus Christ in coming into the world as "the salvation of sinners." The gospel histories tell us how He undertook to bring about that object. They contain several examples of the conversion of the fallen. Did it ever strike you that one element, so to speak, in the peculiarity of Christ's reforming power lay in His marvellous exhibition of this virtue of trust? In every case that I can think of, almost the first step taken by Christ in the reclamation of a sinner is *to trust Him.*

Take an instance. You remember the story which tells of the recovery of a man named Zaccheus from a life of worldliness to a life of godliness. Zaccheus was a publican. A successful member, as it would appear, of that class; grown rich on the dishonest spoils of his office. A rogue and a swindler, living in prosperity among the victims of his rapacity, and the dupes of his deceit. In some way he had heard of Christ, and is curious to see Him. Perhaps his conscience was at times uneasy at the thought of his ill-gotten gains. Any way he finds himself one day lingering on the edge of a crowd in the hope of catching some of the words of the Great Teacher. Anxious to gain a glimpse of the Preacher's face, and being short of stature, he climbs up into a way-side tree, that he may look at Christ as He passes by. He does see Christ, but Christ also sees him. With one stroke, as it were, the sinner's soul is conquered. And what was the instrument of victory? Here are the Gospel words: "And when Jesus came to that place, He looked up and saw him, and said, Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must dine at thy house." They were simple words, and yet here I take it is the secret of Christ's power over this sinner's soul. *He went to dinner with Zaccheus without an invitation.* It was a strange method of conversion, yet it was Divine. Not through the fiery eloquence, or the impressive exhortation of the Preacher, but through the simple exhibition of a generous confidence, of a frank belief and trust in the good points which are never quite absent probably from any sinner's soul, but only lie dormant and undiscovered, did Zaccheus gain the wish and the courage to be other than he was. The trustfulness of Christ gave, as by a contagion of virtue, a new soul to this sinner.

That is a specimen of the redeeming power of Christ.

You may take any other similar incident in the Gospel story, and I think I am right in saying you will find the same characteristic method. *The Contagion of Trust*, the spirit of charity believing all things, of love trusting all, of hope confiding in the best side of every man, is, as I take it, an essential element in all Christ's teaching. You will find it perhaps most prominently in the most prominent document of Christianity—the Sermon on the Mount.

"Oh, but then," somebody says, "you must not take the Sermon on the Mount as a code of morality which can be literally put into practice under the conditions of modern society. Everybody knows that the Sermon on the Mount is an ideal document. Its paradoxical maxims and counsels of perfection cannot be taken as furnishing good working rules for nineteenth-century business life."

Well, the objections of practical business folk are not to be despised. But mark. I do not ask you whether you are able, whether you *can* act out, to the letter, all these maxims. But what I do ask you is this,—"Don't you wish you could? Don't you wish that the spirit which underlies such actions as Christ commends when He speaks of 'turning your left cheek to him that has smitten your right,' of giving your cloak to him that has taken your coat, were more often present in your heart than it is?" You may know that the ideal He sets before you is a lofty one, impossible even to realise in any place short of heaven.

But the real question to ask is this: Do you wish, when you think about it, when you are at your best,—do you wish, I say, that the ideal was less lofty than it is? Do you think that this world would be any the worse place for being a little more like heaven?

Very well then. If you accept Christ's teaching as a lofty ideal, you will work not away from it, but towards it, as much as you can, will you not? Some of you, of course, will be able to go further than others on this path. But all of us, in so far as we are followers of Christ, must go in this direction.

Curiously enough, as I wrote this there came to me in the columns of the daily paper an illustration of the point I am trying to impress upon you. One day last week the *Daily News* contained a letter from a Paris correspondent, in which a description was given of a new play which is being prepared for representation there. The drama is founded on Victor Hugo's novel of "Les Misérables," a book which

some of you no doubt may have read in its English translation. I have always regarded the poet's conception in that book as a very grand one. He wished to exhibit human wretchedness and sin in its most harrowing aspect, and yet to show how one of the most abandoned of wretches may overcome the temptations of misery and crime, and struggle to a position of honour, by the godlike force of an honest purpose. In carrying out his design the author has shown —it is a triumph of genius for which we cannot be too thankful—what an immense power a literal compliance with the command of Christ—"If any man ask thy cloak, let him have thy coat also"—might exercise in the reformation of a criminal. The hero is changed from a ruffian to one of the noblest of men by the exhibition of that redeeming power of trust, of which I speak, on the part of a bishop from whom he had stolen a basket of plate.

I must tell you the main incident of the story.

Jean Valjean, a man who has been sentenced to five years' penal servitude for stealing a loaf, is re-sentenced several times for trying to make his escape from the hulks. So that altogether he remains in confinement nineteen years. "Year by year his soul became more and more withered, slowly but fatally. A dry soul must have a dry eye, and on leaving the hulks nineteen years had elapsed since he had shed a tear." On his release a yellow passport is given him, and he sets out to find his way on foot to the town which has been appointed for his residence. He wanders out into the world to find only too soon that liberation is not deliverance, that though he has left the gaol behind, he has not left condemnation. Everywhere the yellow pass denounces him. Every honest man's door is closed to the convict. His first night of freedom finds him without shelter and without food. Footsore and heart-broken he sinks down under a church porch. An old lady who is leaving the church sees him stretched out in the darkness, questions him, and advises him to knock at a house over the way where the bishop lives. The good Bishop Myriel has the saintly virtues of a Vincent de Paul. He is seated at supper when the unkempt savage-looking convict enters. He makes no difficulty, however, about offering the galley-slave hospitality at his table, or giving him a bed afterwards. His house was not his, he was accustomed to say, but Christ's. His door did not ask a man who entered whether he had a name, but if he had a sorrow; if he was suffering, if he was hungry, if

he was thirsty, then he was welcome. He had divined that under the shaggy exterior of this outcast, who tells his story with brutal frankness, there is a soul to be saved. Jean Valjean eats and goes to bed. Toward the middle of the night he awakens. He thinks of many things, but one thought continually expels the rest. He remembers the massive silver plate he had seen on his host's table. He struggles with the temptation. His host had called him "Sir," and had trusted him. But his heart had been too long hardened. Finally he yields to the temptation, rises on tiptoe, gropes his way to where the valuables are kept, makes them up in a bundle, and walks out of the house.

A few hours later he is brought back by the police, who have examined his bundle and found the plate with the bishop's arms. The old bishop rises to meet the group as they enter. "Ah," he says to the convict, "I am glad to see you. But I gave you the candlesticks too, which are also silver, and will fetch you two hundred francs. Why did you not take them away with the rest?" He tells the gendarmes that they have made a mistake, that they may set the convict free, that they may retire. Then the bishop goes up to the cowering wretch, puts his hand on his shoulder, and says,—"Jean Valjean, my brother, never forget that you have promised to employ this money in becoming an honest man. You no longer belong to evil but to good. I withdraw your soul from black thoughts and the spirit of perdition, and give it to God."

This scene acts upon Jean Valjean like the vision which Paul saw on the road to Damascus. One more temptation, one more struggle, and the victory is complete, and the evil spirit cast out for ever.

I hope you will not complain that this scene is fictitious. It is real enough, true in all its essentials.

Not that I am unaware of the objection that may be raised to the old bishop's method on the score of what would be called unpracticality. Such objections are very formidable I do not deny. But they are not insuperable. At their strongest they only amount to this—that the old bishop was an ideal Christian. At their weakest they cannot but allow that justice should be tempered by mercy, and that in the treatment of a criminal, *his* interest ought to be considered as well as the interest of society.

We have no time, however, to follow out that special enquiry, interesting as otherwise it would be. I return to

the point which I thought the illustration likely to enforce. I am sure we do not half enough believe in the virtue of trust as a moral power.

Consider the doctrine in relation to the morality of everyday life. What is it really that is at the root of half our social miseries? Is it not distrust, suspicion, jealousy, want of sympathy, want of confidence between man and man, and between classes of men?

There are those I know who will argue boldly that society is founded solely on self-interest, and that to exchange that principle for one of unbounded confidence and trust would lead to little short of social catastrophe.

The first half of that statement I utterly deny, the second half is undoubtedly true. But the alternative is not fairly stated.

I utterly deny that the selfish theory of society is the true one. I do not think that self-interest is the only motive of the majority of men. It may be the prominent one I grant. But other motives do exist, and exist often in apparently the most selfish of men. I believe the appeal to these higher motives would not in all cases be so utterly useless as some people appear to imagine. At least of this I am certain—that it is our duty, as Christian people, our solemn duty, to make appeal to those principles and motives more often than we do. It was said of Edward Irving, the founder of the Irvingite sect, that "he went about making men noble by thinking they were so." Of Dr. Arnold the Rugby boys used to say,—"It is a shame to tell the Doctor a lie, because he always believes you."

It was because of that appeal to the good side of human nature, that trust in the good impulses even of evil hearts, that both Edward Irving and Dr. Arnold exercised so great a moral influence. It is to these same impulses you must appeal if you would exert moral influence over your fellows.

And here I think is the hint we want for practical guidance.

The doctrine of trust, remember, is above all things a *moral* power. If you would make trial of its influence, remember its power will fail you, if the moral good of the man you trust is not your first thought. Before you can make a man good by trusting him, you must be sure that there is no tinge of selfishness about your wish that he were so. If you would have others less selfish, you must first set the example of being unselfish yourself.

This is the check which will prevent you from mistaking a mere impulse of weak pity or mawkish tolerance of wrong for the Divine instinct of Christian trust.

It is like the check which political economy has taught us we must put on indiscriminate charity. "To give to him that asketh," where to give is to brutalise or degrade, is to give "a stone for bread, and a serpent for a fish."

So also in your exercise of the moral power of trust, you must remember, that although the "guilelessness of the dove" is commended by Christ, so also is "the serpent's wisdom."

But now look at this doctrine of trust under a slightly different aspect. There is an industrial morality as well as a social.

Take the example of men brought into close relation by the interests of commerce and industrial enterprise. Trust, confidence, credit, good faith, fidelity,—these are the very foundation stones of all business.

Mr. Lecky, in his "History of European Morals," has pointed out that the one respect in which the growth of industrial life has exercised a favourable influence upon morals, has been in the promotion of truth. For although business life affords great temptations to deception and fraud, yet mutual confidence, strict truthfulness, fidelity to engagements, are so transcendently important in all industrial enterprise, that they have acquired almost a new value in the minds of men.

But even here the doctrine of trust may find a much-needed work to do.

I shall make my meaning plainer if I take a personal illustration. Some of you must have read the "Life of Thomas Brassey," the great railway contractor. It is a book which ought to be in the possession of every business man. I know of no one who illustrates more powerfully than he does the contagious moral influence of trust. The secret of his unparalleled success, the foundation of his colossal fortune—two and a half millions, I believe—was emphatically his high moral nature. He possessed, of course, great intellectual power, and he was assisted no doubt by favourable circumstances. But no intellectual power, it has been well remarked, or talent for affairs, could have brought within his grasp the vast works which built up his fortune, if it had not been for the remarkable integrity of his character, the wise liberality of his dealings,

and, above all, the discriminating but absolute trust which he placed in those who worked for him. The devotion and affection of his subordinates was in fact his greatest power. And this arose, his biographer tells us—proving his case by abundant examples—from the quite unbounded confidence which he placed in them, and the liberality and friendliness of his personal bearing. The usual checks and espionage, the commonly-heard business maxims—"Suspect everyone;" "Trust no one farther than you can see them;" "Exact your rights rigorously and you will be respected the more;" "Everyone for himself, and God for us all"—are entirely falsified by the experience of this "great captain of industry."

When we think of the immense works carried on in every corner of Europe, in India, in South America, in Canada, in Australia, removed from all possibility of supervision, we get some idea of how many and how much he must have trusted. And yet not one single case of deception or fraud is recorded.

Are there any business men here who feel inclined to try Mr. Brassey's plan?

If there are, do not forget when you make the trial to add to all the other checks which your experience of life will teach you to apply this check also.

If you would trust others nobly, see you are noble yourself. For that power of trusting only the right people is God's especial reward and protection to the pure in heart.

One point more and I conclude. I have spoken of the doctrine of trust in relation to social morality, to industrial morality; dare I speak of it in relation to international morality?

If there have been those inclined to press the importance of self-interest before, here at least they will urge the all-importance of its claims.

Yet surely it may be permitted to the Christian teacher to ask, Is the time never to come when duty and not merely self-interest, when right and not merely might, when principle and not merely expediency, shall obtain in the wide politics of the nations? Shall the time never come when in the cause of peace, as well as in the cause of war, a nation shall be found ready *to risk something?* Shall self-sacrifice never be as much a principle with the best Christian nations as it is with the best Christian men? Is the doctrine of trust

absolutely an impossible element in the morality of nations? *

I at least for one will not believe it, and however much there may be in the present † political outlook calculated to make one despair, yet I cannot change my belief that the progress of society is forwards, and not backwards. Wars in the nineteenth century have not all been suggested by national greed or national selfishness. There have been examples—it is well at this time we should not forget them—of nations exerting their influence upon other nations, not only in their own interests, but in the service of others; we have seen quarrels that have broken out between nations settled by the mediation of neutral powers; we have seen civil wars arrested, and obstinate disputes settled by arbitration; we have seen a nation imperilling the whole wealth of a great colonial possession to atone for a national crime, and to get rid of a world's scandal; we have seen the same nation paying the way of its army through the very country whose ruler it had come to chastise for an insult to its honour, and to the wonder of other nations not following up its conquest by annexation; we have seen the same nation submitting generously to an award of three millions of money on account of the damage done by a single ship,—an award greatly in excess of what many at the time thought, and which subsequent events have proved, to be a fair compensation,—rather than, by impugning the principle of international arbitration, running the risk of putting back the civilization of the world.

International morality, I venture to say, has during the last fifty years been steadily advancing. God grant that that progress is not now to be stayed even for a time. "To respect scrupulously,"—I quote the words of Lord Derby, uttered not this year, or last, but more than ten years ago—"To respect scrupulously the rights of other nations, of the weakest as well as of the strongest, and to respect those rights as scrupulously as we would maintain our own; to study to preserve in the first instance the Peace of England,

* "Self-abdication and isolation, is that a life worthy of England? Are nations no longer allied, as individuals are, by duty? Ought they not to do good and to combat evil? Are they not members of the great human family? Do they not share the life of all? Ought they not to communicate something of their life to all? Can they remain strangers to the common task of leading mankind towards perfection, the realization of the educational plan assigned to humanity?"—MAZZINI.

† 1879.

and next to that, as far as lies in our power, the peace of Europe and the civilized world; to seek no narrow, no selfish, no exclusive object, but to consider that even our material interests are indissolubly connected with those of neighbouring nations, who are at once our neighbours and our customers; to place our point of honour not in the readiness hastily and impatiently to resent any real or imaginary wrong, but rather in a willingness to submit to the dispassionate arbitration of some competent tribunal, either the claims which we may think we may have upon others, or the claims which others may think they may have upon us—this is the general tenor of the conduct we ought to pursue. . . . If you ask me," he continues, "what is to be done to supply that which seems to be the great want of the time, namely, a greater degree of mutual confidence between the various great powers of the world, I would say frankly, if anybody were to put that question to me, I am not ready with an answer. The man who can solve that problem will be, perhaps, the greatest benefactor to the community which the present generation has seen."

It may be long, my friends, before that benefactor appears. Neither Rousseau's nor Jeremy Bentham's scheme for perpetual peace has yet become in any way practicable. We may have to look for that scheme, for that solution, for that benefactor, in a very different direction. We may be, as philosophers tell us, in an age of science. We have not yet, I trust, altogether passed out of an age of faith. There is still something that lies beyond schemes and systems. To see God in history, in modern history, as well as in ancient, must be the part of any one who reads and believes his Bible, who prays daily that prayer of his Lord's, "Thy kingdom come . . . on earth!"

Faith believes a true conception of human life is to be found somewhere, a goal to which the world is ever tending; a Divine order in which "God fulfils Himself," not only "in many ways," but in the one way of perfectness:—

> "Then shall all men's good
> Be each man's rule, and universal peace
> Lie like a shaft of light across the land,
> And like a lane of beams athwart the sea
> Through all the circle of the golden year."

X.

THE DEMOCRACY AND WORSHIP.*

IT has been somewhere said by Mr. Ruskin that the essential feature of American Democracy has been to "show mankind *how not to worship*—how never to be ashamed in the presence of anything."

There is no doubt a touch of exaggeration in Mr. Ruskin's tone, as there is apt to be, perhaps, in the words of all great spiritual teachers who know, as he does, the power of paradox in pressing home upon the hearts of men some of the deepest lessons they have to teach. But make what allowance we may for the mode of Mr. Ruskin's expression, do we not all feel that there is a degree in which what he says is true, and true, of course, not only of America, where the Democratic principle has been for so long essentially the dominant feature of public life, but true also of our own country, where the Democratic movement is every day making more and more rapid progress. "Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality" is doubtless, in itself, a noble watchword, and modern civilization has achieved much, and has yet to achieve more, under its inspiration; but for all that we must not allow ourselves to forget how fatally easy it has been for men to misread that inspiration, and on how many modern pages of history, alas! it has been possible to re-write license for liberty, class-feeling for brotherhood, insolence for equality.

It is, at any rate, to one aspect of the subject suggested by Mr. Ruskin's words that I would ask your attention. The question which I would propose broadly for consideration is this,—

How far is the influence of modern Democracy likely to

* An address delivered in St. Thomas's Church, Regent Street, at the Annual Festival of the Guild of St. Matthew.

make itself felt upon the devotional spirit of our English Christianity? Is the public worship of any democratised Church of the future likely to lose or gain in those sentiments of Reverence, Admiration, and Humility, which are the acknowledged root graces of spiritual life? Is the English common life of the future likely to grow chiefly out of the Book of Common Prayer? To some minds, I have no doubt, such questions will sound, if not altogether unprofitable, at least premature. "Has it not been for years," it will be said, "the common burden of all the Churches that the people care for none of these things?" Had we not the authority, only the other day, of the great democratic orator of England for the statement that "the working classes care as little for the doctrines of Christianity as the upper classes for its practice"?

Why, then, should we seek to know what is likely to be the influence of Democracy upon religion, when at present, at any rate, the acknowledged danger is that Democracy shows no inclination even to look at religion at all?

But no one, I think, who has any real care for the future of his country, much less has any belief in the Church of Christ, not only as the Conservator of the Catholic Faith, but also as the regenerator of social life, could rest satisfied so to turn the question aside.

There can, indeed, be no more serious question than this, regarded either in its political or religious aspect—How to bring the national religion into true correspondence with those new social forces which are in reality the motive power of modern civilization.

The danger, thank God, is one which is daily more and more commanding attention from all earnest minds. Take three instances as an illustration of this. In each case the difference of view has its own lesson.

I take my first illustration from that remarkable book on "Natural Religion," which has lately been published by Professor Seeley, the author of "Ecce Homo," and Professor of Modern History in the University of Cambridge.

"It is not only," he says, in the chapter on Religion and the State, "for foreign exportation that civilization needs to be concentrated into a doctrine: without such concentration it can scarcely maintain itself at home. . . . There is a mine under modern society, which, if we consider it, has been the necessary result of the abeyance in recent times of the idea of a Church. There is a total want of corre-

spondence between the views of the people and the system under which they live. The body wants a soul, the state wants a Church. . . . The link has been broken which united the mass to the advanced minds. The people have long ceased to understand or to follow their own development. . . . So long as the Churches were efficient this idea of the continuity of civilization was kept before the general mind. A grand outline of God's dealings with the human race, drawn from the Bible and the Church doctrine, a sort of map of history, was possessed by all alike. All are sufficiently aware what bewilderment must arise when this is no longer the case, when those old outlines grow unserviceable, but no new map is furnished." . . . "Does the actual organized Church pretend to perform such a function, to act as the organ of civilization, or the interpreter of human society? Does it explain to us the development by which we have been brought to our present stage? Does it open to us the vista of the future? Does it make us at home in human history, and so save us from the bewilderment and horror which the past excites, when we open its records at random, by showing us how rigorously human progress has always been conditioned, how much is impossible, and at the same time how much and what the laws of history justify us in hoping for? Such guidance was never more needed than now, when this horror is seizing innumerable minds, and exciting them to frenzy. But does the Church even pretend to offer it?" (p. 223.) . . . "The Church once understood its function and discharged it efficiently. Something evidently has arrested development. What? The retrospectiveness, the anxious fear of ceasing to be what it originally was, which seizes an institution when it has begun to be uncertain why it exists."

My second illustration is of a somewhat different character, but as an estimate of the forces with which the Church has to deal, by no means the least important of the three. It is the statement drawn up some years ago by an eminent leader of the working people,—submitted, before publication, to the correction and revision of the late Mr. Mill,—of the best that in his opinion there is to be said about that "doctrine of civilization" which apparently in the view of our first author is to take the place of "religion" in the minds of the people. "This doctrine holds," Mr. Holyoake says, "that the secular is sacred, and seeks to find out the actual condition in which it shall be impossible for man to be either depraved

or poor. It does not say that all things are material, or that there are no spiritual agencies; it does not enter upon these propositions, but confines itself to showing that there are material agencies in this life, whatever else there may be, and that these, as far as they can be discovered, are the calculable forces of the world, which cannot be neglected without folly or hurt, and that it is wisdom, mercy, and duty to attend to them. . . . Secularism is not an argument against Christianity, it is one independent of it. It does not question the pretensions of Christianity; it advances others. It does not say that there is no light or guidance elsewhere, but maintains that there is light and guidance in secular truth, whose conditions and sanctions exist independently, act independently, and act for ever. Secularism is the religion of the present life. . . . It teaches man to acquit himself well in this world, as the purest act of worship, to study the truth, to judge by reason, to regulate human interests by human considerations, and to act on that rule of utility which conduces to the greatest good of others; thus endeavouring to deserve another life by the unhasting, unresting pursuit of duty in this."

My third illustration is less academic than either of the others. It is written by the wife of one of the hardest workers among the East End clergy, and forms a portion of an article which some of you may have read, under the title of "Passionless Reformers," in the *Fortnightly Review* some months ago. The whole article, I venture to think, is not more remarkable for its clear conceptions of the conditions of East London heathenism, than for its frank avowal of the failure of most of the so-called religious influences to make any impression on those conditions.

This is the testimony she gives as to the great mass of the people amongst whom her daily life is passed :—

"The mere intellectual conception of principle as such is absent; they have no moral idea; spirituality to them is as little understood in idea as in word. The religionists have taught until the people know all and feel nothing. The people's souls have been preached to death. . . . The old channels are no longer available for the waters of life: without it the people are dead, live they ever so comfortably. A spiritual life is the true life. As men become spiritualized, as the moral ideal becomes the source of action, the old words and forms may regain meaning. Phrases now to them meaning nothing, or only superstition, will then expunge

their very being; but without the ideal they are but empty words, like the sounding brass or the tinkling cymbal. . . . How can we give these degraded people the priceless gift of spirituality?"

Now let us combine these three testimonies, and what is the result?

1. The University Professor, representing the highest intellectual thought of the day, foremost "as a master among those who know," tells us that what English society wants, and what therefore it is the duty of the Church of Christ to supply, is in the first place intellectual guidance, a doctrine of civilization, a map of history.

2. The Secularist leader, representing all that is most robust in the self-educated artizan, tells us that what the English workman at any rate wants is secular discipline, light, and guidance in secular truth and morality.

3. The practical worker, representing all that is noblest and most self-sacrificing among the passionate yet reasonable Social Reformers, tells us that what is wanted by "the dim common populations" is Spirituality, a moral ideal—in one word, Worship—something to draw out, to educate the emotional side of human character.

A Doctrine, a Discipline, a Worship—these three things then, I think, we may fairly take to be the three great social and religious needs of English Democracy.

Can the Church of Christ to-day in England satisfy these needs?

We who are members of the Guild of St. Matthew at any rate have no difficulty in answering that question. We have but to point to the authoritative declaration of the object of our guild. A doctrine; a discipline; a worship; these three things are categorically implied in the three propositions in which the special aims of our brotherhood are publicly declared.

It is of doctrine we are thinking when we say that our first object is "To get rid by every possible means of the existing prejudices, especially on the part of 'secularists,' against the Church, her sacraments, and doctrines; and to endeavour to justify God to the people."

It is of *discipline* we are thinking when we say of our second object that it is "To promote the study of social and political questions in the light of the Incarnation."

Finally, it is of *worship* we are thinking when we say that our third and great object is "To promote frequent and

reverent worship in the Holy Communion, and a better observance of the teaching of the Church of England as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer."

As to the success of our method in carrying out at any rate the first two objects of our guild, I must refer you to the published Reports of our proceedings.* As evidence of the spirit in which we endeavour to work I may perhaps be allowed to quote the following paragraph from last year's Report:—

"Believing as we do that the great fact of the Incarnation is the foundation of Christian teaching and practice, we cannot see how or why the Christian Church should not consider every question bearing upon the welfare—'secular' and spiritual—of man. We feel the absolute need of preaching in season and out of season the 'Gospel of the Kingdom,' the fact that the Church is a real living society on this earth, working for the greatest good of the greatest number, and embodying in her sacraments and creeds the strongest assertions of true 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity' ever given to the world, doing this, too, on far higher grounds than can possibly be taken by any 'secular' creed or society. Does the secularist talk of fraternity? We tell him there is no merely theoretical basis of true fraternity so grand and sure as the fact of the Fatherhood' of GOD. Of equality? Nowhere is it embodied so grandly as in Holy Baptism and the Holy Communion: nowhere have its principles been carried out to their logical conclusions so thoroughly as in the Communistic Church of Jerusalem. Or liberty? The priests and bishops of the English Church have constantly led the people to victory over kings and popes alike. Of the rights of labour? Bible-history, as apart from Bible-biography, begins with a 'strike' (Exod. v. 45), and some of the bitterest denunciations of the prophets both of the Old and of the New Testaments are launched against those who 'keep back by fraud the hire of the labourers who have reaped your fields.' Of patriotism? The English Church welded the incoherent Saxon kingdoms into one nation. The representative government of later times was modelled after the earlier councils of the Church. Of the wider bond of the brotherhood of nations? St. Paul preached it for the first time in Europe, in the teeth of the exclusive Greeks at Athens;

* These may be had from Mr. F. Verinder, Hon. Sec. of the Guild, Goldsmith Square, Stoke Newington, N.

the Hebrew prophets,—nay, more, our Lord Himself reiterated it in equally exclusive Judæa. The Catholic Church is the only true International."

It is, however, upon the third object of our guild that I would especially desire to lay stress to-night. And in doing so I would wish to address myself, in the first instance, more particularly to the members of the guild itself.

In the promotion of reverent worship in the Holy Communion there is no doubt a much closer connection with the other two objects of our guild than perhaps is apparent at first sight to the ordinary unimaginative church-goer. For in that highest act of Christian worship we recognise the expression of the great doctrine, not only of personal salvation by Christ, but social atonement in Christ. While never for a moment, I trust, losing sight of the necessity of that personal religion by which we are each required to strive daily to render our individual lives more worthy of that filial relationship with the Father which our Master came to reveal,—as members of this guild we have had pressed upon us the still greater present necessity of insisting upon that social religion by which we are each required to be strenuous in fellow work with God, through which, according to His purpose, the collective life of man is gradually being fashioned after the image of "the kingdom of heaven." Protestant Individualism and Catholic Socialism are doctrines which both find their natural home in the "fellowship of Christ's religion." It has been, however, as the interpreter of the second of these doctrines, that the Guild of St. Matthew has hitherto found its special mission.

Now, in all humility, I would venture to suggest that another step forward should be taken. A Public Religion needs a Public Worship.

It has been something that we should have taught the people that the doctrine of the continuity and solidarity of life, the noblest perhaps of the great Democratic ideas of our time, is also a central doctrine of the Christian Faith. But has not the time come, do you think, when we should show the people that we can give them forms of worship adapted to cultivate aspirations in harmony with that teaching? Do we not need to show them that of the three elements of man's nature, Intellect, Feeling, Activity, religion can never make a harmonious whole while one of these elements remains uncultivated; and that in these days it is especially the emotional or affective side of man's

nature which needs that development. In old days, the emotional and æsthetic education of the people was cared for through the forms of the Church's public worship.

As in our day the tendency of even public devotion may rightly be described as chiefly lyrical, aiming at the expression of the inward communion of the soul with God, and of the experiences and thoughts of individual life, so, on the other hand, the worship of the Church of the Middle Ages was essentially social and dramatic. Its hymns were liturgical, and in the function of the mass it represented the doctrine of the faith as a present reality. By a few changes of words and costume the Ritual was transmuted into those stately mysteries which dramatized Bible stories for the multitude. The Gospel for the day, broken up into parts, and interspersed with Church hymns, needed nothing more to make it attractive to the simple peasants who crowded the church's aisles. The walls around him glowed with pictures of the patriarchs and prophets, and with all the incidents of the life that began in Bethlehem and ended on Calvary. Living, as it were, in a spiritual world, praying mostly on consecrated ground, believing that the angels and saints were always round him, every act of his life was coloured indifferently with religion, just as a Puritan in latter times spoke of household matters in Scriptural phraseology.

If men in those days did not speculate critically on doctrine, they did realise intensely the history of Christ and its bearings, not only on their own individual souls, but also on wider human society. Their cravings for political reform were always justified by an appeal to religion. Every faculty of the soul, every day of the week, every feeling and thought, owed service to the Church, and found satisfaction within it.

We cannot bring back those old times, nor, if we could, have I at least any desire that we should. Indeed, it is only as we become increasingly certain that they never can be restored, that we shall learn to estimate them fairly, and to do justice to those finer perceptions of moral beauty and greatness in which the apology for the Middle Ages must ultimately be found.

Meantime, though we cannot and ought not to restore the old times, we certainly can and ought to do something to restore the old spirit of social devotion and worship, which is as much needed as ever for the spiritual government of man.

And if the old forms, the fixed solemnities of the Church's stately ordered ritual of the seasons, have, to a large extent, with those at any rate who especially need such influences to counteract the dull Materialism and Secularity of their lives, been either discredited or have lost their power, then is it not our duty to find new channels through which "the water of life" may flow to the souls of the people?

This is the problem which I would wish to see the Guild of St. Matthew, in addition to its other work, setting itself to solve during the coming year.

Towards the solution of that problem I can myself offer at present but the barest hints.

And in the first place, to keep strictly within the lines of our English Prayer Book, I would ask, Do we always sufficiently regard the social character of the occasional services of our Church? Do we always take as much pains as we might by our method of conducting them to emphasize the fact that they are a public recognition on the occasion of the most important events in the life of the individual, that his private life is a matter of public concern, that he owes himself, in short, to the community? Might we not, by adding dignity to these services, do something to revive some of that civic feeling so remarkable in antiquity and so sadly decayed among ourselves? "In the theocratic worship of heathen Rome public worship was worship indeed. It was interwoven with the whole round of daily life outside the home, and in one shape or another it may be said to have been never out of sight. It was shared in by every citizen, not only as a duty but as an enjoyment." I do not say, of course, that this was a type of public worship whose features it is desirable to reproduce under Christian influence, but I do venture to think that the principles of Social Duty which underlay that worship should be brought prominently under the consecration of Christian Ritual.

Again, do we at all sufficiently value the principle of the Calendar? I do not mean merely by marking the existence of the Saints' days by services in our several parish churches, but by recognising on all suitable occasions the moral discipline to be gained from the enthusiastic commemoration of great ideals. I have often wondered how, believing as we profess to do in the continuous present inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, in the present living realisation of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints, we can rest satisfied with the imperfect reflection of even the past history of our

Church which the existing Calendar gives. Might not the Guild of St. Matthew find useful work to do in claiming for purposes of public commemoration in our services a somewhat wider range of consecrated lives? I have always thought that there is much to be learnt in this direction from such a Calendar as that drawn up by Auguste Comte as the basis of the so-called Religion of Humanity, in which are commemorated not only what we should call the strictly saintly ideals, but all the great names of the world's heroes,—leaders of industry, as Gutenburg and Watt; poets, painters, and musicians, as Dante, Raphael, Shakespeare, and Mozart; philosophers, as Descartes, Newton, and Bacon; statesmen, as William, Cromwell, and Frederick. There would be difficulties no doubt in such commemorations, but they are difficulties which are worth facing. Such acts of commemoration, for example, as those which under the countenance of the late Dean Stanley became a special feature of the services in Westminster Abbey, may serve to give an idea of what might be done in almost every parish church from time to time to create that sense of communion with our fellow-men, to foster the feeling of an historic past, an attachment to local memories, the delight in the names of the mighty dead, all of which may exert so potent an influence on the morality of the living. Is it well, do you think, that the lives of such modern saints, to mention only names which come at once to the tongue, as Simeon, Wilberforce, and Venn, Keble and Selwyn and Pusey, of Bishop Patteson and Frederick Maurice, of Charles Kingsley and Charles Lowder, of Sister Dora and Katherine Tait, should be known chiefly to our people through the pages of private biography, and not through the solemn commemorative services of the Church, who was their common mother?

Again, does there not yet remain much to be done to bring the realm of music and of art into the popular service of religion?

I confess it was to me very significant that the first public service in which Archbishop Benson took a responsible part was one so novel, albeit so beautiful, as that which followed Evensong in Canterbury Cathedral on the day of his consecration. An Easter Liturgy of Praise, in which the chief outward expression of worship was found in the glorious music of Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang* brought to a fitting close the solemn public services of that day.

In the address which the Archbishop gave at this service

there are words which show that he at least was not unconscious of its special significance.

"Whatever we lack," he said, "whatever of elasticity we require to reclaim indifference, or enable us to be patient with man's ever-changeful modes of expressing faith or reverence, Christ our Master will yet supply. . . . This, surely, is the keynote of our devotions to-night. . . . 'The Hymn of Praise' is not the echo of the past, or the sound of nature, or the hum of machines. Its first burst is this—'All that hath life and breath, sing to the Lord!' . . . For even these modern services of ours, like variations that illustrate, but interrupt not, the fixed solemnities of the Church's stately ordered ritual of the seasons, are, as it were, signs of what we mean. They are new-born modes of this time, it may be; but their moving strength and popular power are drawn from the Rock of Ages, and their very form (modern as it may be) moulded the offices of the Church, and devised the very melodies for their rendering. . . . Many products and results of the most modern life among us, and many characters that are being formed under influences in no wise Church-like, to begin with are really destined, each in its turn, to add to the grace and beauty of the Church and to its enrichment with the spoils of freed-thought and the tributes of all pure feeling."

To some extent already the Nonconformists have been beforehand with us in this matter. In the Wesleyan Chapels of our country districts, at any rate, no services are so popular, or seem to rouse so vivid, and on the whole so healthy, an influence as the "services of song"—selected readings, that is to say, from some well-known story, either sacred or secular (*e.g.*, the "Life of Joseph," the "Pilgrim's Progress," "Jessica's First Prayer"), illustrated with music and hymns and song. The idea needs only development. Something at least of the strength and joy, the elevation of soul and calm of heart which the more cultivated class may gain from the rolling harmonies and choral strains of sacred cantata and oratorio in stately cathedral aisles, may come also to the souls of the humblest congregation gathering in a simple village church to listen to the sacred words of Scripture story, illustrated by music and hymn and anthems. I can remember, for my own part, at any rate, few services more impressive than one in which I took part, only the other day, in my own little church in Buckinghamshire, when, after a few prayers and a simple address by our Rural

Dean on the lessons of the Christian Year, the "ordered ritual of the Church's Seasons" was illustrated by readings from Keble's "Christian Year" (that almost formulary of the Church of England), followed by appropriate musical selections from such authors as Mendelssohn, Gounod, Sullivan, Hullah, Attwood, Cousins, and Dykes. The beautiful poems of Keble, as you can well suppose, seemed to gain, if that were possible, an added force and beauty when read as Lessons in the public worship of the congregation. The thrill of feeling in the people, for example, was unmistakable as Keble's striking lines on Good Friday, with the pathetic closing words, "O call Thy wanderer home!" were followed by the lovely solo from Gounod, "There is a green hill far away."

This village oratorio of the "Christian Year" suggests also another thought. In so far as worship means the enthusiastic contemplation of the highest life and ideal known to man, surely it might find as appropriate nourishment from the inspiration of the great poets as of the great musicians. If the human soul may be sustained and strengthened and raised above itself by the anthems of Purcell and Wesley and Attwood, surely also it may be by the poems of Milton and Herbert, of Wordsworth and of Keble. A reading of Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty*, of Tennyson's *Strong Son of God, Immortal Love*, of Lowell's *Legend of Sir Launfal*, or some other poem possessing that "character of truth and seriousness" which Mr. Arnold tells us is inseparable from the best poetry, might surely sometimes not inappropriately take the place of the anthem—I am not sure if not also as an "interpreter of life," occasionally with profit, of the sermon. To those, at any rate, who accept the Archbishop's conception of "veritable continuous inspiration," Poetry, Ancient and Modern, to be read in churches, ought not to seem any more unseemly a title for a service book of the Church than Hymns Ancient and Modern with accompanying tunes, for the same purpose.

I confess I cannot at all understand the little use that is made of poetry in the public instruction of our Christian congregations. For by how much does the function of the Christian teacher differ from that of the poet? "Every true poet *is* a teacher," Wordsworth says; "to console the afflicted, to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier, to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, to feel, and therefore to become more

actively and securely virtuous—this is the true purpose of poetry."

No! we do not do well, I am sure, to neglect in the public services of our Church that source of moral inspiration which all true poetry supplies. The idealisation, the transfiguration of life, that, in a word, it seems to me is the great work of the Christian teacher to-day in England. We all need it, but especially perhaps do those amongst whom for the most part the work of the Guild of St. Matthew lies.

But I must conclude. How can I end better than with that thought of Transfiguration? As a Guild, our chief work has been among those who call themselves Secularists. Let us take our motive for such work from the thought of that Transfiguration on Mount Hermon, in which we may surely see the measure of the capacity of our humanity, and from which we can learn no deeper lesson than this—*The potential spirituality of all secular life.*

XI.

POETRY AND LIFE.*

IT is a little curious that this Tenth Book of the "Republic of Plato," which furnishes us with our subject to-night, commences with a disparagement of Poetry, and yet ends with one of the most beautiful and expressive poems of the old world. I am sure we cannot read the grand and solemn scenes of the Mythe of Er, in which, with an almost epic magnificence, the pilgrimage of the human soul, its development and its destiny, is pictured, without feeling that we have to do with one who is not only a dialectician and a philosopher, but one who is both in expression and in thought a poet.

And yet, as I said, the book which closes with so grand an imaginative vision commences with an indictment of poetry.

"Having come to years of discretion," Plato says, "we know that poetry is not truth, and that a man should be careful how he tampers with falsehood, for there is a mighty issue at stake, the good or evil of the human soul. I have loved Homer ever since I was a boy; but much as I love the man, I love truth more, and therefore I must speak out."

The counts of his indictment are briefly these:—The poet is an imitator, not a creator. He cannot give to us reality itself, he can only image to us the appearance of things, even twice or thrice removed perhaps from the real things them-

* The present Lecture was the last of a course of Ten Lectures on the "Republic of Plato," delivered on the Tuesday evenings during Lent and Easter, in St. Jude's Church, Whitechapel.

selves. And what good can a mere imitator or mere image-maker do mankind? What laws, for example, did Greece ever receive from Homer? What practical notions or inventions, much less what "way of life"?

Then again, Poetry, he says, appeals to the weakest side of the soul—the emotions and the feelings—rather than to reason and to thought. It teaches us to lose self-control under affliction, to bewail our evil luck, to nurse our sorrows. When we hear Homer, or some other tragedian, reciting at length the sorrows of heroes, lamenting and beating their breasts, we sympathise with and admire the poet. And yet surely we ought not to feel pleasure in seeing another do what we would hate and abominate in ourselves. When we stumble we ought not, like children, to set up a cry, hugging the wounded part; but when the dice have once fallen, we should take the measures which Reason prescribes—not making a lament, but finding a cure.

And so, because it is only delightful, not useful; because it appeals to emotion, not to reason; because it can give us only an image of the truth, not the truth itself,—Poetry must, in a well-ordered state, be placed under sentence of exile. The second of these objections deserves a word or two of remark. The first, I think, we may safely pass by, or at least it will be sufficient to quote in answer to it the words of two modern poets.

To the question—"What good has he done?" which Plato asks concerning Homer, Mr. Ruskin, speaking of Shakespeare, answers: "To *do* any good, or *get* any good, in the common sense of good, was not to be within his permitted range of work. Not for him the founding of institutions, the preaching of doctrines, or the repression of abuses. Neither he nor the sun did, on any morning that they rose together, receive charge from their Maker concerning such things. They were both of them to shine on the evil and the good: both to behold unoffendedly all that was upon the earth, to burn unappalled upon the spears of kings, and undisdaining upon the reeds of the river." And the other saying is this, from Goethe: "We must take care of the Beautiful, the Useful may take care of itself."

But the gravest charge which Plato brings against Poetry, he finds in the emotional spell which she exercises over the human soul. "She will excite and feed and strengthen the worthless part of the soul," he says, "and will destroy the rational part."

That the emotional is the inferior faculty he has, of course, no doubt. That opinion depends upon his analysis of the human soul into the three elements of Reason, Spirit or Passion, and Appetite, which was doubtless commented upon in a previous lecture. Poetry will interfere, he thinks, with the due relationship of these three elements. She will exalt Emotion into the position where Reason ought to reign supreme.

Now without entering into the controversy concerning "universals" and "particulars," "opinions" and "sensations," which commentators will tell you is really at the root of Plato's position here,—indeed, without attempting to determine whether in this trinity of faculties the emotional comes before or after the rational,—it is plain that no sound concordat between the three faculties can be promoted by ignoring the legitimate claims of any one faculty.

We may well allow with Plato that the despotic reign of Emotion would be even more disastrous than the despotic reign of Reason. But all the more on that account we should say that in a sound system of education the training of the emotions can be as little safely neglected as the cultivation of the intellect. There were special reasons, no doubt, in the circumstances of his own age, which made the control of the emotional side of the Greek character seem to Plato the most pressing educational necessity. But who shall say that in our own modern age of industry, where the appetitive faculty is so markedly the dominant element in life, there is not an equal necessity to lay stress upon the cultivation of the emotional or affective side of man's nature? In our own country at any rate, where thousands are simply absorbed in a blind frenzy of competition, the active, energetic powers of human nature practically have matters all their own way. The Reason and the Emotion are for the most part but the ready servants of the commercial or the industrial appetite.

But if men are to practise virtue, it is not sufficient to convince their reason of its expediency. Intellect, after all, is neutral. It may tell us how a thing may be done, why a thing may be done; but it cannot impel us to do it. For that you want the emotional motive. To get men to practise virtue, you must make its exercise in some way an object of their affections. To make men virtuous, you must teach men to love virtue. "We live," Wordsworth says, "by admiration, hope, and love." It is in those generous sym-

pathies of our nature which teach us to take delight in whatever is good and lovely in nature or in human character; to give honour to it, and to strive to copy it; to foresee the better things to be reached hereafter by ourselves and for our neighbours, and to strive to help the world on towards attaining them; to believe in the loyalty and truth of neighbourly affection, and to strive in some measure by our actions to make the belief more general;—it is in these things that the treasures of true life consist.

Now will any one say that to reach this level of tone or temper we can any of us afford to neglect that source of inspiration which all true poetry supplies?

Indeed, if I were asked to define the function of poetry, I should be inclined to say that it was to idealize as much as possible our every thought, affection, and work. To idealise human life, and so far to elevate it—has not that been the work of all true poets, from Homer down to Alfred Tennyson? The more prosaic our ordinary duties, the more need there is for such idealization, the more need there is to keep up the tone of our minds by frequent visits to that "imperial palace" where we may bless ourselves in silence for those—

> "High instincts before which our mortal nature
> Does tremble like a guilty thing surprised;
> . . . those first affections,
> Those shadowy recollections,
> Which be they what they may
> Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
> Are yet the master light of all our seeing;
> Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
> Our noisy years seem moments in the being
> Of the Eternal Silence; truths that wake
> To perish never."

But it is not merely in the cultivation of a high tone of thought and feeling in ourselves that Poetry finds its function. It has, and I cannot but believe that it will have much more as the days go on, a great social work to do. The coming ages of industry will offer no less worthy subjects, we may well believe, for the genius of Poetry, than the bygone ages of conflict. In turning aside from the passions of war and battle to sing the praises of industrial chivalry and achievement, the poet may find "new glories for the eloquent tongue," subjects of inspiration far more essentially poetic in their nature; for there can indeed be no nobler function than to teach that the highest happiness of man is

to be found in the culture of the neighbourly affections, the generous sympathies, the love of social justice, the zeal for public good.

"In his efforts to accomplish this object," writes one whom some think, and not perhaps unjustly, to be the greatest social philosopher that the world has seen since Plato, "the poet will naturally be led to form prophetic pictures of the regeneration of man, viewed in every aspect that admits of being ideally represented. When it is understood that the sphere of Imagination is simply that of explaining and giving life to the conclusions of Reason, the severest thinkers will welcome its influence, because so far from obscuring reality, it will give greater distinctness to it than could be given by science unassisted. Utopias have their legitimate purpose; . . . they form a class of poetry . . . which gives a foretaste of the beauty and greatness of the new life that is now offered to the individual, to the family, and to society, . . . only, as in the case of all other products of the imagination, they must always remain subordinated to the actual laws of social existence. And thus, by giving a systematic sanction to this poetry, as it may be called, of politics, most of the dangers which now surround it will disappear."

But to return to Plato. I think it is plain that however unsatisfactory may have been his opinion of the poets of his day, he himself at least was a poet in the sense of that conception of the poetic office which I have just quoted from Auguste Comte. Plato was essentially a Poet of Politics.

For it is not, after all, his logic, but his poetic and moral enthusiasm that has made Plato one of the greatest masters of virtue that the world has ever known. He creates in the heart of man a desire to live the just and the right life; not so much by proving, as this whole book of the Republic is an effort to do, that justice and virtue are the supreme happiness, but by the sympathy inspired by his own intense faith in the transcendent worth of those qualities.

One could not well perhaps have a better illustration of Plato's method in this respect than in that Mythe of Human Destiny with which the Republic closes. The great dialogue on human life and conduct could not well be brought to a close without leaving its author face to face with the solemn problem of man's destiny—the Enigma of Humanity—which has tried the hearts of the noblest and sincerest thinkers in

all ages. Had Plato been only a philosopher, he must have acquiesced, with his successors through twenty centuries, in regarding the problem as insoluble. But Plato was poet as well as philosopher. The arguments of pure reason might fail to prove to him the future of personal existence, at least as a conscious continuance of existence in the present. But the importunate questionings of the heart could not be silenced. Instinct, after all, was stronger than logic. "To affirm confidently," as he says elsewhere, "would become no reasonable man; but it is worthy of him to face peril boldly in the faith of the soul's immortality, for the peril is glorious." And so when logical processes fail, he is fain to make, as he terms it, "a bold venture," and to clothe his instinctive hopes for the future in the form of a Mythe.

The story takes the form of a legend said to have been related by Er, the son of Armenius, who, being killed in battle, was laid on his funeral pyre, but came to life again after twelve days, and told how he had seen in a trance the Judgment of the Dead and the mysteries of the other world.

To give you a fair idea of Plato's conception, I must quote somewhat fully. The translation I adopt is in the main that of Dr. Jowett. Er's story was that "when he left the body his soul went on a journey with a great company, and that they came to a mysterious place, at which there were two chasms in the earth; they were near together, and over against them were two other chasms in the heaven above. In the intermediate spaces there were Judges seated, who bade the just, after they had judged them, ascend by the heavenly way on the right hand, having the signs of the judgment bound upon their foreheads; and in like manner the unjust were commanded by them to descend by the lower way on the left hand; these also had the symbols of their deeds fastened on their backs. . . . And he beheld and saw on one side the souls departing at either chasm of heaven and earth when sentence had been given on them; and at the two other openings, other souls, some ascending out of the earth dusty and worn with travel, some descending out of heaven clean and bright; . . . and they told one another of what had happened by the way, those from below weeping and sorrowing at the remembrance of the things which they had endured and seen in their journey of a thousand years under the earth; while those from above were describing heavenly delights and visions of inconceivable beauty."

Then he describes how the souls, after resting for seven days, came on the eighth to a place "in colour like unto a rainbow," only brighter and clearer, where the eight heavenly bodies—the sun, the moon, and the six planets—revolved each in its proper circle round a distaff of adamant, which rested on the knees of the goddess Necessity. Seated on thrones by her side were her daughters, the three Fates—Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos—singing of the Past, Present, and the Future, and guiding from time to time with their hands the revolving cycles, whose harmonious motion produces the music of the spheres.

"And when Er and the spirits arrived, their duty was to go at once to Lachesis; but first of all there came a prophet who arranged them in order; then he took from the knees of Lachesis the lots and samples of life, and going up to a high place, spoke as follows:—'Hear the words of Lachesis, the daughter of Necessity. Mortal souls, behold a new cycle of mortal life. Your genius will not choose you, but you will choose your genius; and let him who draws the first lot, first choose a life which shall be his destiny. Virtue is free, and as a man honours or dishonours her, he will have more or less of her; the chooser is answerable—God is justified!' When the Interpreter had thus spoken, he scattered lots among them, and each one took up the lot that fell near him. Then the Interpreter placed on the ground before them the samples of lives . . . all sorts of lives—of every animal, and of man in every condition. . . . Most curious, he said, was the spectacle of the election—sad and laughable and strange, the souls generally choosing so as to avoid their own condition in a previous life."

And when all the souls had chosen their lives, their choice was made irreversible by the three sisters. Then they passed beneath the throne of Necessity, and journeyed to the plain of Forgetfulness, where they drank of the waters of the River of Unmindfulness.

"Then after they had gone to rest, about the middle of the night there was a thunderstorm and an earthquake, and then in an instant they were driven all manner of ways, like stars shooting upwards to their birth. Er himself was hindered from drinking the water. But in what manner or by what means he returned to the body he could not say, only in the morning, awaking suddenly, he saw himself lying on the pyre."

To the Christian, the solution of the great Enigma of

Humanity which Plato offers in this Mythe will appear to fall far short of the Divine possibilities of individual dignity and social fellowship of which the Gospel of the Resurrection is the revelation. Still there is much in the teaching of the Mythe, with regard to Life's mission and its destiny, which, notwithstanding the long interval of twenty centuries, we in these days can in no sense be said to have outgrown. One at least of those lessons I may perhaps in conclusion briefly indicate.

The Distaff of Adamant upon which the whole fabric of existence revolves, lies on the knees of Necessity. Have we not here, as in a parable, that Reign of Law of which modern science has so much to tell us? All round the human race stand the fixed laws and the hard forces of nature, and the life of man—nay, the whole fabric of existence—is "rounded" by necessity. As a poet of our own day * has said,—

> "Necessity, and who shall dare
> Bring to her feet excuse or prayer?
> Howe'er we turn and pause and tremble—
> Howe'er we shrink, deceive, dissemble—
> Whate'er our doubting, grief, disgust,
> The hand is on us, and we must,
> We must, we must.
> 'Tis common-sense and human wit
> Can find no better name than it,
> Submit, submit!"

And yet by submitting man may learn to conquer or to guide. Those laws, in their action so unhasting yet so remorseless, are yet altogether beneficent to the man who is not satisfied to be a mere "playing pawn at blindfold chess," but strives to fashion his affections and will to move in harmony with them. Indeed, what is all education but simply the right instruction of man in the knowledge of those laws which surround him, and the laws of his own nature—"the intellectual laws on which God has made knowledge to depend; the moral laws on which He has made happiness to depend; the social and political laws on which He has made national prosperity and advancement to depend; the economic laws on which He has made wealth to depend; the physical laws on which He has made health to depend"?

It was because Plato recognised this so clearly that his

* Clough.

theory of education is not only in advance of the prevailing notions of his own time, but in one respect, at least, is in advance even of that of many modern philosophers and theologians. For to him is undoubtedly owing the distinction of being the first to perceive that education must comprehend the whole of life, and, indeed, could not even end there, but must be carried on into the future.

To Plato, the Ideal of Human Destiny was a life of ceaseless education.

And what higher ideal of life can there be than that even for the Christian?

It is true that we may speak of life as a "state of probation." But it is not true, for it is a Calvinistic libel upon Christianity, to explain that as meaning that there is any natural antagonism between earth and heaven. "The life that now is" is something more than a pilgrimage through a wilderness of trial to a Paradise of reward. This earth is no mere sojourn of expiation—a vale of sorrows ever darkened by the evil wing of the Prince of the Power of the Air. Man's work has other value than that of furnishing a qualification for rest hereafter. The earth is of God; and man, who is in the image of God, has the duty laid upon him of forming this earth more and more into the image of "the kingdom of heaven:"

> "He is sent forth upon the field of life
> To war with evil."

But the evil is to be combated not merely as a means of discipline for individual capacity, and character, but as a recognised part of that "fellow-work with God," by which His great educational plan for the perfecting of the full stature of Humanity is to be wrought out. Both designs are, no doubt, part of God's plan—the perfection of the individual and the perfection of the race. But it may well be questioned whether those who, conceiving of Heaven only as a state to be gained hereafter, are mainly concerned with efforts to increase individual spirituality, are as truly co-operating with God's design, as those who, desirous of realizing somewhat more of the "kingdom of heaven" here on earth, strive to mend and beautify and guide humanity, to mitigate somewhat its sorrows here below, to extinguish its woes, to eradicate its vices—in a word, to combat for its salvation. It has been truly said: "There is a vast fund of hidden selfishness, or what at least has often the practical

effect of such, in the idea of heaven as ordinarily conceived; and much of the tolerated misery of earth may be traced to it."

The idea of Plato is truer, and, as I at least think, more in accordance with that belief in the filial relations of man to a Heavenly Father which a greater than Plato has taught us.

Human life is a great educational problem working itself out according to the plan of God. In the development of that plan, each age of the world has its own special work to do,—a fresh term, so to speak, to disengage from the unknown quantities of the problem. The law of life for the race, as for the individual, is thus one of infinite progression and growth. Progress is not only a vital fact of human existence, it is its vital law. So to comprehend that law as to harmonise all the facts of life, is the office of Religion. For Religion is then only worthy of its name, when it furnishes man with a comprehensive scheme of duty in unison with all the facts of nature and existence.

How far for the race the direction of its line of progress is within human power we cannot say. For the individual it would seem that, within certain limits, the choice of his destiny is within his own hands.

"Virtue is free — the chooser is answerable — God is justified," were the words of Lachesis.

And as to the destiny hereafter, this at least the Mythe seems to tell us, that to the mind of Plato, as for the human soul there was a law of infinite growth and development, the fact of Death was a mere accident—an incident of life.

> "Death, there is not any death, only infinite change,
> Only a place of life which is novel and strange.
> Life, what is life?—that it ceases with ceasing of breath?
> Death!—what were Life without change but an infinite Death!"

Beyond the gates of death there lay, it is true, the awful contrasts of Retribution; but also in the farther distance the glorious vision of a progressive universe of souls—life beyond life, ever offering newer and higher ideals of attainable perfection.

> "Life following Life for ever!—for what if the sun
> Grew chilled, and the universe cold and the orbits undone,
> And all the great globes should fall back into chaos once more?
> They would wake at a glance of the Light, as they wakened before:
> There is no death for ever."*

* "The Ode of Life"—MORRIS.

And for the rest, may we not end with Plato?—

"Wherefore my counsel is that, believing the soul to be immortal, and to possess the power of entertaining all evil as well as all good, we ever hold fast the upward road, and devotedly cultivate justice combined with wisdom; in order that we may be loved by one another and by the gods—not only during our stay on earth, but also when, like conquerors in the games collecting the presents of their admirers, we receive the prizes of virtue; in order that both in this life, and during the journey of a thousand years which we have described, we may never cease to prosper."